Lord Wastwater

Sidney Bolton

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LORD WASTWATER

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BY

SIDNEY BOLTON

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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LORD WASTWATER.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SILVERSMITH.

Meanwhile Roke had at once proceeded in his search, and had started off for Soho before an hour had passed. He ransacked Soho from one end to another; he cross-questioned every silversmith; he followed up three or four who had removed to other parts of London, and one who had retired to a well-earned repose at Beckenham.

But no one recognised the knife. Nor was there any answer to the advertisement, and for some days matters seemed in no way to advance. The elation which Roke had felt when the scraps of paper were first discovered was beginning to ebb away, and he realised very clearly that the chances were, after all, a good deal against his gaining much from this clue. However, he determined, after a week had been spent in fruitless search in London, to try Soho near Birmingham; and accordingly, on the Monday after the 16th of June, he started on a fresh search. His first day produced no results, but just as he was going back to his hotel he passed a small silversmith's and walked in. He began as usual to ask whether they had in the shop any knife

similar to that which he showed them. The usual negative was returned, and Roke inquired for the master of the shop. When he came he informed Roke that he had bought the business that year, and that his predecessor, who had become bankrupt, had gone back to his native village, and, as he believed, lived there still. His wife had some money, and he was keeping a little shop. The village was Caterby, on the Yorkshire coast, near Whitby; the man's name was Ryder. Two more fruitless days were spent in inquiries, and then Roke, feeling further search was useless, started for Caterby as a last hope.

When he arrived at Whitby he inquired about the distance to Caterby, and was told it was five miles off across the

moors. It was late in the afternoon, and Roke therefore determined to go to the hotel for the night, and drive over to Caterby next day.

The next morning quite early he started. The village lay at the head of a little sandy bay between two high stretches of moorland; there were some fishermen's cottages, and some larger houses, and one or two farms dotted about higher up the valley. It was a lovely morning; everything was bathed in brilliant sunshine, the sea was a calm, deep blue, and a few white and brown sails were visible here and there upon it. Roke was not an imaginative man, but even he felt the contrast between the scene which surrounded him and the errand on which he had come, and when

the driver said cheerfully, "Beautiful day, sir,—couldn't have had a better day for the drive," he felt a momentary wish to turn back and leave the evidence he had come to seek unfound. However, this weakness passed off rapidly, and on reaching Caterby a little later on, he inquired eagerly of a little boy, who took him for a tourist, and was offering him fossils and jet ornaments, where Mr Ryder lived.

"Which Mr Ryder?" asked the boy. "There's Jim Ryder t' fisherman, and George Ryder what keeps t' shop, and Mr Ryder up at t' farm yonder. Which is it yo' want?"

"I mean Mr Ryder who used to live at Birmingham, and came back two or three months ago."

"Ah, that'll be George Ryder at t' shop," said the boy. "Turn to the right at t' bottom of t' hill, and that'll take yo'."

They followed his directions, and in another moment drew up before the shop.

"Is Mr Ryder at home?" asked Roke of a slatternly looking woman who appeared at the door.

"George, George," she shouted, "here's a gentleman wants to see you."

Presently George appeared. He was a small, slight, intelligent-looking man of about fifty, with scanty dark hair. He asked briskly what Roke wanted. Roke got down and told the driver to wait. "Can I speak to you for a few minutes in private?" he asked.

"Certainly, sir," said Ryder, in a rather

wondering voice. He led the way into a small back-room where all the breakfast things were still standing about. "The room's rather untidy," he said. "I'll tell Matilda to clear away the things."

"No, no, don't," said Roke. "I'm rather in a hurry. We shan't be overheard, I suppose?" he added, looking round.

The man looked up rather anxiously. "Overheard? Oh no," he said; "but what's the matter?"

Roke took the knife out of his pocket and held it out. "Have you ever seen this before?" he asked.

The man paused, then took the knife with some hesitation. He examined it carefully, and Roke noticed that he looked specially closely at the two little

silver plates on the sides. After a bit he looked up. "May I take these off?" and he pointed to the silver plates.

"Certainly."

The man rose, opened a drawer, and took out some tools. With these he extracted two small screws from the right-hand plate, and then removed it. Underneath was a small hole, evidently meant for a screw. Ryder examined this hole and the silver round it with a magnifying-glass, and then he said slowly, "Yes, I know this knife; I have had it to clean."

"Ah!" said Roke; "and how do you know that?"

The man looked at him again, and then said, "This is a police case, I suppose?"

Roke nodded.

"Knife stolen?"

"No; it was used to commit a murder." The man started, and Roke went on, "And I want to know if you can describe the man who brought it you."

Ryder drew his breath in through his teeth. "I can describe him, and I must, I suppose. I recollect him, because the knife was so curious, and I wondered who he could be. He came to my shop one night last January with this knife and asked me to clean it."

"And what was he like?" asked Roke.

"Well, it was January, and he had an ulster on, and it was late. I can't describe him very well, but I should know him again if I saw him."

"Ah!" said Roke. Then after a pause, "And what can you remember about him?"

"Well, he was tall, and he had a fair beard. I can't describe him properly, but I should know him again without doubt. I never forget a face."

"And how do you recognise the knife?" asked Roke.

"Ah," said the man, "it's a curious thing about the knife." Here he took it up and looked at it again carefully. "These two little silver plates at the side were a bit loose, and I took them off and put in fresh screws. While I was doing it my hand slipped, and I was afraid I'd injured the carving, but I'd only made a little mark under the plate, and here it is."

And he showed Roke one or two scratches on the side of the knife.

Roke thought for a minute. "And this was last January?" he said.

"Yes, early in the month; but I can't tell you the exact date. That would be in the books in my old shop. I could easy find out for you."

"Well, you shall do that, please, Mr Ryder," said Roke, briskly. "The question now is, Can you come back with me to London at once?"

"To London!" said the man, with a look of dismay. "Is this necessary?"

"Well, I'm afraid that's what I've come for," said Roke. "I want you to identify the man, you see."

"And who's going to pay?" asked Ryder.

"Oh, that will be all right," returned Roke. "We want you for evidence."

The man, who was screwing on the little silver plates, looked up. "Well, if I must, I must, I suppose," said he; "but I don't half like the job. What's the murder, and who is it?"

"I'll tell you all about that as we go," said Roke.

"There is one thing I should like to know first," said the man, who was obviously unwilling to go.

"Well, what is it?" asked Roke, impatiently.

"How did you find me out?"

"How did you come to put scraps of bills into the little holes in the knife?" said Roke.

"That was it, was it?" said the man. "Well, you see the little silver plates cover the two holes, and the silver round them had got rather worn away, so that the plates wouldn't screw on quite tight, and I filled in the holes with little pieces of paper, and that made the plate fit. I——"

"I understand," said Roke, who was fuming with impatience to be off. "We shall miss the train if you're not quick, and we shall have plenty of time to talk on the way. Get your things for the night and come along."

And a few minutes later Ryder and Roke were on their way to London.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BALL AT WASTWATER HOUSE.

It was past eleven on the night of Thursday, the 17th of June, and the ball at Wastwater House was just beginning. People said it was going to be the most brilliant ball of the season, and every one had come prepared for an even unwonted amount of splendour. Lord Wastwater's parties were always magnificent, but on this occasion people admitted that he had outdone himself. The great hall was filled with masses of flowers, so that the

eye seemed to rest on nothing else; the broad marble staircase which led out of the hall was lined with choice white flowers, while rich damask hangings gave a background of colour to the whole. Above, the brilliantly lighted rooms were filled with people; and from the ball-room, which had arches opening on to the staircase, and seemed to be one mass of flowers, an outside staircase led down into the garden, where were tents and seats and carpets; and in one part of it a choir of boys were singing madrigals, which sounded softly through the summer air. Over the whole house and garden there reigned a luxury which had something Eastern about it: the perfume of the flowers, the music, the brilliant yet softened

light, appealed to the senses, and transported people into another land. Lord Wastwater was able to command even the weather, for it was one of those warm June nights when chills seem things of another world, and damp is unknown. The garden lay behind and around the house, and was surrounded by quiet streets, so that no noise was heard, and it might have been deep in the country: the silence was only broken by the sounds of music and revelry which floated through the silent air.

Mrs Dearing and Patience had arrived early. The former had not seen Murchison since their talk ten days before, and, so far as she knew, nothing had passed between Patience and Lord Wastwater

which could in any way bring matters to a crisis. But Mrs Dearing had come with her eyes open, prepared to watch the course of events, and she hoped also to get a few minutes' talk with Frank in the course of the evening.

They found Lord Wastwater, who always received his own guests, at the top of the stairs. He asked Patience for a dance, adding that it must be some way on, after the guests had arrived. "Shall I say the sixth from now?" he said.

Patience assented, and they passed on into the ball-room. Presently St Buryans came up and begged for a dance, which Patience rather reluctantly granted. She feared more entreaties and efforts to induce her to change her decision, and she

went off with a rather piteous glance at Mrs Dearing. That lady looked about for Frank, but not seeing him, she subsided on to a sofa next to Lady Marazion and a portly dame with many diamonds who was talking to her.

"Dear Lord Wastwater," said the latter, a certain Mrs Gilmersdale,—she was Mrs Golightly's mother, and had just brought out another daughter, — "how well he does these things! The rooms are quite beautiful."

"Yes," said Lady Marazion. "I wonder how much this ball will cost him?"

"Oh, a fabulous sum, of course," returned Mrs Gilmersdale; "but it doesn't matter to him. It's so nice to see money spent by one of a real old family, and not by

these horrid Jews." Here she recollected that the Marazions had lately inherited the fortune of one of the Jews in question, and felt uncomfortable. Lady Marazion, however, did not think it necessary to take exception to her remark, and replied—

"Unfortunately so few old families can afford to do it."

"Yes," said Mrs Gilmersdale, anxious to retrieve her mistake; "and it is always so nice when the money comes into the hands of those who know how to use it." Lady Marazion smiled. "Is there any heir to the dukedom after Lord Wastwater?" added Mrs Gilmersdale.

"No," said Lady Marazion; "the title dies out."

"Such a pity," said Mrs Gilmersdale,

thoughtfully. "Why doesn't Lord Wastwater marry?"

"Nobody knows," said Mrs Dearing, who wanted to continue the conversation in the hope of learning something about Lord Wastwater.

"Any one would be glad enough to marry him," said Mrs Gilmersdale. "But there are odd stories about. I *have* heard," she went on, dropping her voice, "that he has a Hottentot wife and several children."

"Well, I have never heard that," said Lady Marazion, stiffly; "but I believe he behaved very badly when he was abroad."

"Oh, there are plenty of stories," said Mrs Gilmersdale, "and I daresay they are true. But marriage would be a different thing, of course."

"Yes," said Lady Marazion; "think of the Hottentot children."

"I think it is impossible," said Mrs Gilmersdale; "he would have too much self-respect to do such a thing as that. I hope he will marry some nice girl in England. He might take a fancy to my Julia, now." And she laughed.

"Who is that dancing with Mrs Golightly?" asked Mrs Dearing.

"Oh, that is her new friend Count Hohenstein. I always tell Minnie she ought not to dance with him, he is such a *mauvais sujet*."

At this moment Mrs Golightly and her partner passed them.

"Have you seen Julia, Minnie dear?" asked her mother.

"Yes, I saw her in the garden with Charlie Dunbar, having no end of a time," said Mrs Golightly, laughing. "Let's see,—it was about two dances ago we saw her, wasn't it?" she asked, looking at her partner.

"I saw no one but you," he returned.

"Nonsense," she said, with a look of understanding.

"Shall we go and look for them in the garden?" he asked; "it is hot in these rooms."

"Yes; and I'll send her back to you, mamma, if I find her with her young man," said Mrs Golightly, moving away with Count Hohenstein, and leaving Lady Marazion with all her feathers curling with indignation.

Mrs Gilmersdale, who saw this, said—

"I wish Julia wouldn't flirt so with that young Dunbar. I know he hasn't a penny. Really, nowadays the girls are so out of hand one can do nothing with them. It is absurd coming to a ball, for one never sees them the whole evening. Dear Lady Marazion, you are very fortunate in having no daughters, they are such an anxiety, and marrying men are so rare nowadays."

At this moment St Buryans and Patience were seen returning, and Mrs Dearing rose to meet them. "Let us walk round the rooms," she said; then as soon as they were out of earshot of the two ladies she went on—

"Well, Patience, has he said anything more?"

"Oh, he was very nice," said Patience, rather wearily, "and he said he hoped it would make no difference. But he was very much depressed, poor boy; it makes me rather miserable."

Mrs Dearing looked at her critically, and whilst she looked she suddenly saw Patience's face light up and her eyes brighten. Lord Wastwater had just come up to them.

"Can you give me this dance?" he said. "The people all seem to have come, or else I can't endure standing there shaking hands any longer—I don't know which it is."

He laughed, and after a moment's hesitation she consented, and they went off, while Mrs Dearing, pressing her lips together significantly, went back to her seat.

"Were you engaged?" he asked, with a smile.

"Well, to tell the truth, I was," answered Patience; "but it's to a man I can't bear. I don't mind throwing him over. I don't know that that makes it the more justifiable, though," she added.

"Oh yes, it does," said Lord Wastwater; "always do what you like. But it isn't such a compliment to me."

"Oh, what do you want with compliments?" she answered; "your opinion of yourself is quite good enough."

He laughed again. "I have a truer opinion of myself than any other man or woman in the world," he said. "It is my only merit that I know myself thoroughly."

They had reached the staircase into the

garden, and the band was just beginning a valse. "Shall we dance, or go into the garden?" he asked.

"The garden, I think," she answered; "it is so hot."

They went down the stairs in silence: she felt as if there had been something momentous in her choice—as if something would depend on it. But she would not allow herself to go further and think out what it meant.

Since that night in the previous week when she had first realised her own state of mind, she had been living in a constant sense of struggle and tension. No word of what she was feeling had passed her lips: she had spoken neither to Mrs Forrest nor to her aunt, and they, on their side,

although they guessed a good deal, had respected her wish for silence. She had met Lord Wastwater occasionally, but only in public—he had not been to see her; once or twice she had suspected that he had avoided her. But she rejected the idea as absurd; for of course she knew nothing of the revelation which had been made to Frank, and by him to Lord Wastwater. At one time she had thought of throwing over the ball on some excuse or other, but the knowledge that it would excite remark, and perhaps another motive, had prevented it. She had resolved to give herself this one more chance. After looking at the matter in what she convinced herself was quite a dispassionate way, she decided that she might be wrong after all, and that Lord

Wastwater might care for her in the way she cared for him. So she resolved to put it to the test that evening. "If he treats me exactly as usual," she thought, "I shall know that I have only been giving way to folly, and I will compel myself to leave off caring about him. If not——" But she did not let herself consider the alternative in any of its details; she simply kept it as a kind of possible region of bliss in the background,—a region as yet unknown and unexplored. Now, as she descended the steps into the garden with Lord Wastwater, she felt as if her fate were going to be put to the touch.

He, on his side, had thought deeply of what Frank had told him. He did not really in the least doubt its truth. And

he had deliberately resolved that he would not marry Patience. As he had said, no one knew his own character better than he did, and knowing it and his past, he felt that no one who wished well to Patience could desire that she should be his wife. His regard for her was probably the purest feeling in his nature, and his wish for her happiness very real and true. And he felt that if she married him, happiness could only be hers for a short time. "We should have a honeymoon of a few months," he said to himself, "and then, and then, —no, it shall not be." But the temptation had been presented to him, and it had a dangerous charm. Frank's action had hardly been guided by counsels of wisdom.

In the garden all was cool and quiet:

the moon, in her third quarter, shed a slight soft light; the strains of the valse were heard from above; people passed and repassed, half hidden in the darkness. They walked on in silence until they had got some way from the house, then Lord Wastwater said, "Let us sit here—it is the place I like best in the garden."

Under a large elm was a seat, cushioned and covered with rugs; close by was a tangled thicket of flowering-shrubs; and the scent of the syringa was heavy in the air. For some time nothing was said; then Lord Wastwater spoke.

"I feel almost as if I were back in the Pacific," he said. "This night is unlike England,—it has none of its coldness and severity."

She made no answer, and he went on—

"I wish you had seen my island,—its beauty is beyond anything you can imagine."

"Shall you ever go back there?" she asked, softly.

He half started. "Go back there? who can tell? What makes you ask?"

She felt as if she had been indiscreet, though she hardly understood why. "I meant, just to see it," she said,—"for a visit."

"Oh," he answered, in a different tone. "No, I shall never go back for a visit. If I go, I shall stay. Would you like me to go?" he asked, after a second's pause.

"I? Oh no—not to stay, at least."

He turned on the seat, resting his elbow on the back so that he could see her. She was sitting looking straight in front of her, and the moonlight was full on her face. It had a wonderfully tender expression, and suddenly she turned and looked at him, and their eyes met.

"Are you happy?" he asked, in a low voice, bending towards her.

"Yes," she said.

He took her hand and kissed it.

"But you are looking tired," he said. "Have you been happy lately? Is all well with you?"

She looked down. "I am rather tired," she said, in a low voice. "I have—I have been rather worried about something."

He took her hand in quick sympathy.

"Won't you tell me what it is?" he asked.

She shook her head. She felt that his power over her was almost paramount, yet she tried to resist.

"Do you think you had better not tell me?" he said, gently. "You know you have often let me help you before."

The subtle influences of the place and night, and the impulses of his own nature, had conquered him, and his determination was forgotten. Gently he drew her towards him. "Let me help you again," he said; "tell me what is troubling you?"

There was a pause, and for a while they sat in silence—a silence more dangerous than speech. Suddenly a sound was heard: both looked up, and Lord Wastwater started,

and rose hastily to meet a man who was advancing.

It was a servant who had come with a message. "Can I speak to you, my lord?" he said.

"Yes; what is it?" asked Lord Wastwater.

"Mr Roke wants to see you, my lord; he told me to say he had brought the man you expected."

There was a pause. Lord Wastwater stood looking at him, but his thoughts were evidently elsewhere.

"Say I am coming," he said at last, shortly; and turning, he went back to Patience.

She had been awaiting his return like one in a dream. But she was soon to be

awakened. When he came there was no trace of the feeling he had shown before, and he said quickly, "I must go in, Patience; some one wants to see me. Besides, it is supper-time, and I must go and do my duty. Will you come?"

She glanced at him hastily, for the change in his tone came upon her with a shock. She even fancied he spoke with a certain sense of relief. But she controlled herself, and answered in as light a tone as his, "Yes, let us go; I have missed several dances, I fear."

They went slowly back. The moon was veiled by a cloud, and a soft air began to stir the branches. It was not cold, yet Patience shivered as they returned in silence to the house.

Meanwhile Roke, mindful of Lord Wastwater's injunctions, had driven with Ryder straight from the station to Wastwater House. Ryder demurred, urging the lateness of the hour, but Roke assured him that it was but little past twelve, and they would still be admitted. When they reached the house, however, the carriages, policemen, and link-boys, showed that a party was going on, and Ryder again made an effort to induce the detective to go home.

"At any rate, let's go to the back-door," he said. "They'll never let us in among all these swells."

"Nonsense," returned Roke, angrily; "you just let me manage. I know what I'm about, all right."

It had occurred to him that Murchison and De Lisle would almost certainly be present at the party, and that, if this were so, the silversmith might have an opportunity of seeing them. Full of this thought, he silenced his companion's scruples and passed up to the door.

It was open, and they entered without difficulty.

But as soon as the entrance had been accomplished the difficulties began. They were at once accosted by a servant, who said it was quite impossible to see Lord Wastwater. Roke insisted, and after a long altercation, the butler, who had been sent for, and who was accustomed to much that was unconventional on the part of

Lord Wastwater, consented to refer the matter to Mr Murchison.

"The very thing," said Roke. "I'm sure he'll say I'm right." And then he nudged Ryder, and said in a low voice, "Look out now; but mind, if you should chance to recognise any one, you're to tell me quietly—do you understand?"

Ryder nodded, and they waited for Frank's arrival.

In a few minutes Frank was seen approaching. Ryder looked at him as he came up with a perfectly unmoved gaze, which was watched by the detective with secret satisfaction. Frank knew Roke well enough, for he had seen him with Lord Wastwater, and on hearing what was the matter he took his part, and at

once sent off a couple of servants to find Lord Wastwater. Then he told the two men to wait, and went off.

"Have you ever seen that man before?" asked Roke.

"No, never," returned his companion.

"That's well," muttered the detective.

The hall in which the two men were standing was a large one: on the right was the supper-room, which was visible through the open door; in front was the great marble staircase, mounting up in three flights to the gallery above; to the left was the library, and a passage leading through into the garden. The men stood near the door, and from where they stood a few steps led up to the passage and the other part of the hall. They stood

unnoticed, gazing at the scene before them. People were passing to and fro from the staircase to the supper-room, and Roke could see the little tables crowded with men and women, all apparently at the height of enjoyment. The air was filled with sounds of talk and laughter, everywhere diamonds were flashing, and the strains of the band sounded faintly from above. Suddenly Roke's quick eye caught sight of Bobby De Lisle descending the stairs,—he was talking eagerly to a very pretty woman, and was making his way to the supper-room.

"Look at that man," said Roke, quickly.

Ryder stared without making a sign. De Lisle came nearer, passed, and went into supper.

"Have you ever seen him before?" asked Roke.

"Never," returned the other.

"Then it is the farmer fellow after all," thought Roke, and a kind of pride filled his heart because of the triumph over Lord Wastwater. They waited quietly on in the hall, while the dancing and feasting and enjoyment went on all round them. Murchison returned to tell them that Lord Wastwater was coming, and Roke walked forward with him for a moment, talking to him. But by this time the presence of the two men with their morning clothes and their unfestive aspect had attracted some attention, and several of the guests were asking each other who they were.

"They've come to let off fireworks, I expect," said Count Hohenstein, laughing.

"Or else Wastwater's got the bailiffs in the house at last," said Bobby—"looks more like that."

There was an audible titter amongst a group of people who were just coming from supper, and who had heard Bobby's remark, and several turned to look at the two men. Meanwhile Roke came forward, eagerly scanning their faces, in the hope that amidst the laughing and talking crowd he should see Lord Wastwater. Suddenly, while he looked, as at a given signal, all the voices were hushed, and all eyes seemed to be directed to a spot behind him. He turned, and as he did so he saw Ryder standing, his arm out-

stretched, his eyes fixed on the passage which led from the garden.

"There!" he exclaimed; "that's the man who gave me the knife—the knife with which Goldstein was murdered!"

Lord Wastwater stood in the doorway, with Patience by his side.

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER THE BALL.

Again there was silence: Ryder was still standing staring at Lord Wastwater, while Roke looked on in mute dismay, and the smart crowd around them waited for the next event. Lord Wastwater alone seemed unmoved. He turned quietly to Charlie Dunbar, who stood near, and asked him to take Patience to supper; then he went up to Roke.

"What is the meaning of this?" he said, sternly.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," answered the detective, with some confusion. "I think the man must be drunk. He is the silversmith I went in search of. I brought him here at once, as you wished. Now he seems to fancy you are the man who gave him the knife. I don't the least know what he means."

Lord Wastwater approached Ryder, and looked full in his face. "Do you say it was I who showed you that knife in January?" he asked.

The look was returned. "Well," said Ryder, "of course you're dressed different, but I'll take my oath you're the man."

"Nonsense!" said Roke; "that's Lord Wastwater himself."

"I don't care who he is," returned

Ryder, in a dogged voice; "that's the man who brought me the knife."

"Oh!" said Lord Wastwater, coolly. "It can't be helped, Roke—the man's mistaken. We must give up the clue."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Roke, who had become rather thoughtful. "We had better go. Good-night, my lord; I am sorry to have disturbed you for nothing."

"Won't you have some refreshments?" asked Lord Wastwater.

Roke looked quickly at him. "No, thank you," he replied, "unless you would like to hear how I found my man."

Lord Wastwater glanced round at the various guests. The silence of surprise was ended, and people, seeing that Lord Wastwater seemed to be in no way affected

by the strange incident they had witnessed, had begun talking again. Lord Wastwater hesitated. "I have hardly time now," he said, "yet, I don't know—I should like to hear about it. Come in here," and he led the way into a small room which opened out of the hall. "Now, then, tell me what you can."

In a few words Roke told what had happened, and ended by saying—

"You see it's some time ago that Ryder had the knife."

"Let me think—what was the date you mentioned?" said Lord Wastwater.

"It was about the beginning of January," answered Roke.

"January, was it? Yes, it's some time ago. Still the man ought to be found

with this clue. It's some one like me, we know that." And he laughed. "Well, I must go, or people will think something odd has happened. Good-night, Roke. I'll send your friend to you and some supper."

He left the room, and soon afterwards Ryder came in, followed by the butler bearing a tray of provisions. Roke ate but little, however, and was silent and preoccupied, and all Ryder's efforts to make him talk were unavailing.

Lord Wastwater returned to his guests, but a strange chill seemed to have come over the company. Those who had overheard Ryder's words had told the others, and the wildest rumours prevailed. Some said that an arrest had been made, others

that the murderer had been recognised and had escaped, — all agreed that in no house but Lord Wastwater's could such an event take place. Patience and Mrs Dearing were amongst the first to go, and the other guests soon followed. At last the good-nights were said, and the carriages had all rolled away. "A good ball till that *contretemps*," said Lord Wastwater to Frank; "that was unfortunate."

"Yes," said Frank, lighting his candle; "what did it mean?"

"Why, the detective who is looking for Goldstein's murderer found a silversmith who had cleaned the famous knife, and brought him here, thinking I should like to see him. It seems when he'd got him here he thought I was the owner of the

knife, so the detective has had his trouble for nothing."

"But it's rather a bore," said Frank; "all these people heard it."

"What does it matter?" said Lord Wastwater; "it will give them something to talk of,—they want it badly enough. Patience was looking very well to-night, I thought."

"Was she?" said Frank, shortly. "I hardly saw her."

"She went very early," said Lord Wastwater. "Are you going, Frank? Come for a turn in the garden, and let us get calm and cool before going to bed."

"Thanks, no," said Frank; "I am rather tired. Good-night," and he went slowly up the stairs.

Lord Wastwater looked after him fixedly,

then turned and went out by the passage he had passed through with Patience. He went into the garden, and paced slowly for some time up and down the terrace. Then he went across to the seat where he had sat with Patience, and threw himself on it in a half recumbent position. All was changed since he and she had been together there an hour or two before. The garden was silent, the lights were out, the moon was so low down in the heavens that she was almost invisible, and a pall of darkness and of gloom seemed to have fallen on the scene. The large trees looked ghostly in the dim light, and a faint rustling of the leaves was the only sound which broke the silence. Long did Lord Wastwater remain there motionless, and in this time his life

seemed to pass before him,—its various hurrying, exciting, adventurous scenes abroad, its peaceful calm since his return. And in the midst of this calm, one figure stood out ever prominently, that of Patience. And as this conviction gradually grew on him, he became restless, and at last he rose and began to walk up and down, his head bent, his thoughts occasionally taking the form of half-muttered sentences. "What am I to do?" he thought, "what am I to do? Difficulties surround me, and I have not the courage to cut through them. I have got what I wished, all I wished, and now . . . But why am I not satisfied, since they are just the difficulties I wanted to face? Ah, it is this new element that disturbs

me! I had never thought of that. . . . If I had but known before what she felt—if I had but known." He stopped, threw back his head, and laughed. "I am persuading myself that we should have been happy—that I might have satisfied her highest ideal as a husband," and he laughed again, a laugh which jarred on the silence of the summer night. "No, that shall not be. I will not marry her, even if nothing is discovered. I would not have married her even had I known beforehand that she loved me. Patience shall be happy,—whatever happens, she shall be happy. And she will forget me. To-night in the garden she was hardly herself. She cannot care for me much. She does not know me, or she would not love me. Yet,

if she did. . . . But no, it's absurd, and I have only to think of how best to show her that there is nothing in this dream of hers. At Ashcroft it will be easy. I will see her very little, and be just on friendly terms, and then I will go away, . . . unless that is settled for me. She could not love me if she knew. Yet if she did . . .?" And again the thought swept back upon him, and he looked up with a light in his eyes to where the dawn was already breaking in the east. "Could it be, could it be that she would rise above the usual conventional morality, and love me in spite of everything? We would go away together, far away, and she should find happiness." There was a long pause, then he went on with a gesture as if he were pushing some-

thing from him. "No, it shall not be. Even if her love triumphed she would not be happy. And it would not triumph. I will put the idea from me, I will leave her in peace. She will forget, and I—well, if the end does not come one way it shall in another. I am too weary of the empty days, and the dull motiveless passage of time. And the end must come soon." He turned to go back. The dawn was breaking and the birds were singing, but as he passed through into the house in the sweet morning light his face looked grey and haggard and old.

Patience had gone home in a state of mind which was certain to produce a sleepless night. She was completely puzzled by Lord Wastwater's conduct, and indeed by the events of the evening altogether. In

the garden her hopes had risen high: for a few moments she had believed that the dream she hardly dared to think of would be realised,—that her future would be brighter than she could venture to imagine. Then had come the interruption, and Lord Wastwater's instantaneous change of manner. What did it mean? In these days people analyse their own motives and those of others more than would have been thought decorous, or even possible, by Emma Woodhouse or Diana Vernon, and Patience was quite ready to examine the conversation most minutely. The conclusion she came to was that Lord Wastwater cared about her, at any rate to some extent, but that, for some reason or other, he did not wish to let it go further. What the reason was it seemed

impossible to discover; and the idea of the Hottentot or other marriage, which would probably at once have occurred to Lady Marazion or Mrs Dearing, did not enter her mind. She reflected long on the problem, but at last forced herself to put it from her. She was to meet him for the next Sunday at Ashcroft: there the matter would be put to the test. She knew that there would then be plenty of opportunities for seeing him, if he took advantage of them; if he did not, it would mean that she must give up hope. Then there was the other strange incident—the man who had shouted out something about Lord Wastwater and the knife. She had heard the words plainly: "That's the man who gave me the knife—the knife with which Goldstein

was murdered." Lord Wastwater had taken no notice, but had apologised for asking Charlie Dunbar to take her to supper, on the ground that he must go and speak to some one on business—nothing more. What was it, the business? As we have seen, she knew all the details of Mr Goldstein's murder, and she knew that the curious knife was one of the chief elements of mystery about it. Had it really belonged to Lord Wastwater? and if so, had the murderer got it from him? Suddenly a thought flashed across her brain—a thought full of horror, which she turned from as soon as she had really grasped it. Frank, he lived in the house, could he have taken the knife? "No, no, it's impossible," she said to herself—"impossible. Of course it is

a mistake,—the knife was stolen, or lost, or something. I will ask Lord Wastwater. He will reassure me." But the idea did not leave her in spite of all her efforts to put it from her thoughts, and she was harassed by an ever-recurring miserable fear about Frank.

Two days after, she and Mrs Dearing started by an early afternoon train for Ashcroft. Mrs Golightly's Sunday parties were well known, and it was rather the thing to go there. On arriving they found their hostess on the terrace in front of the house, with her mother, Mrs Gilmersdale, and her sister Julia. Mrs Golightly expressed great delight at seeing them.

"So good of you to come early; we shall have time for a little talk before the rest

of the party comes. I have been terribly anxious about the weather, but it looks fine. We want to dine out of doors to-night if we can."

Mrs Dearing settled herself in a chair by Mrs Golightly's side, while Julia and Patience wandered off together. Julia was a pretty, lively girl, who liked amusement, and took life easily. It was a superficial life, and made no great demands on her energies or those of other people, so that she was often said to be a "refreshing" person. Patience and she liked each other, although they were not great friends. It was in fact doubtful whether Julia ever was really great friends with anybody, unless it was temporarily with a man.

"Have I told you who is coming?" asked

Mrs Golightly. "It is always pleasant to know, so that one may make one's plans beforehand."

"Oh, well, my days for making plans are pretty well over," returned Mrs Dearing, with a laugh; "but I believe I do know who is coming, for I have heard of Lord Wastwater, and Frank Murchison, and St Buryans, and Mr and Mrs Forrest."

"Yes; you know the Forrests, I think?"

"Of course; she is Patience's most intimate friend, and such a nice woman."

"Yes," said Mrs Golightly, with a little doubt in her voice, "she is charming, only perhaps a little, a little unsympathetic, isn't she?"

"Well," said Mrs Dearing, "I have never had much occasion to demand her sympathy,

but Patience always says it is very deep; perhaps it is not very wide. She limits it to a few people. But who else comes?"

"Oh, Charlie Dunbar and young Dick Graham, that's all, except Count Hohenstein, who is here already. He is out somewhere with Tom."

"Tell me about Mr Golightly's visit to America, and the mines he went to see," said Mrs Dearing, who was not above certain occasional speculations.

The three ladies accordingly talked on pleasantly enough, until they were interrupted by the arrival of tea, and of most of the other guests, who had come together by a later train. Only Lord Wastwater was absent, and Frank announced that he would arrive in time for dinner. The guests stayed

in the garden till it was time to dress, some playing lawn-tennis and some watching them, or strolling about the numerous walks,—for Ashcroft, although not a very large house, had a lovely garden. It sloped down to the river, and there were quantities of old yew-hedges, cut close and trim, which made almost a labyrinth of paths, through which Mrs Golightly's guests, and sometimes Mrs Golightly herself, wandered at will. At length, however, the clang of the dressing-bell warned them that they must go,—"but it doesn't matter," said the hostess, "for it is a delightful night, and we shall dine out of doors and stay out all the evening. Tea-gowns, of course, at dinner."

Mrs Forrest and Patience went up-stairs

together, and when they reached the former's room, Patience threw herself into a chair, exclaiming, "Evelyn, it's pleasant, isn't it, being in the house with a man you're in love with, and two men you've refused! I can't imagine what made me come. Oh, dear, I can hardly bear it." From which it will be seen that Patience's secret was no longer one to Mrs Forrest; and indeed a long conversation the previous evening had revealed to that lady all she had suspected, and more besides.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ISLAND.

The dinner-party was proceeding on the terrace. Three people from a neighbouring house had come over, so that the number was now sixteen. Lord Wastwater had of course taken in the hostess, and Patience sat on his left. On Mrs Golightly's right sat Count Hohenstein. Julia looked rather bored between St Buryans and Frank, for the former would try to talk to Patience, and Frank and she never got on at all. Mrs Forrest was deep in talk with one of

the neighbours, an old friend of hers. All seemed to be going well: the usual number of moths flew into the lamps and were burned, the usual doubt was expressed by the older ladies as to the necessity of wearing shawls, while the young ones asserted that their tea-gowns were sufficient protection against any weather. At Mr Golightly's end of the table the conversation was very quiet and decorous, but his wife kept the talk at a very rapid rate, and at times the fun became noisy. She chaffed Lord Wastwater about his island in the Pacific, of which every one knew something and nobody knew much; and she told Count Hohenstein wonderful stories about it, which Lord Wastwater contradicted in a way which only encouraged

her to proceed. Patience, feeling that anything was easier than to talk rationally, fell in with her mood, and the fact that she saw Lord Wastwater looking at her once or twice in surprise only seemed to increase her recklessness. St Buryans was drawn in, and the only person entirely neglected was Count Hohenstein's neighbour, Mrs Chavasse, who sat in prim and silent disapproval of what she believed to be the prevailing tone of London society.

But of her they recked nothing, nor did Patience heed the anxious glances which, when the noise had grown louder, Mrs Forrest sent in her direction. At length the dinner was over, and then Mrs Golightly asked what they were to do. "Are we to go away to another part of the terrace,"

she said, "or can you endure to have us here?"

"Stay here and smoke with us," said Count Hohenstein. "All ladies smoke in my country—why should not you?"

"H'm," said Mrs Golightly; "so I do, for that matter, but not always," and she glanced at Mrs Forrest and Mrs Chavasse. "No, Count, not to-night; you shall join us later." And she moved away, followed by the other ladies, to the farther side of the house. Mrs Forrest tried to join Patience; but the latter avoided her, and, taking Julia with her, walked off to the Rose-garden as it was called, which lay at a little distance from the house, surrounded by shrubs and yew-hedges. Mrs Gilmersdale devoted herself to Mrs Chavasse, and

listened with apparent sympathy to her discourse on gardening and the ingratitude of the poor. Mrs Golightly talked to her daughter, Carry Chavasse, who was inclined to be fast, and looked up to Mrs Golightly as a bright particular star, while Mrs Forrest and Mrs Dearing walked backwards and forwards on the terrace talking very earnestly about Patience. Meanwhile the object of their solicitude and her companion had wandered through the Rose-garden, and so by various mazy walks down to the river. There was a little boat-house in which several boats were moored, for Mr Golightly loved boating in any form. Julia suggested that they should go out, and they were just untying an American canoe when men's voices were heard close by.

"Here come the men," said Julia; "now I wonder who they are? If it's that silent Frank Murchison, I shall run away. Let me look through the hedge." She peeped through, and exclaimed, "All right; it's Lord Wastwater and Charlie Dunbar—capital! one for you and one for me. Lord Wastwater terrifies me, so you shall have him; besides, he is a great friend of yours. Come, Mr Charlie," she went on, as the two turned the corner, "I want you to take me out in the canoe. It's splendid on the river now. Patience and I were just going, but I expect we should have upset," and she laughed; "then you would have had to rescue us. Come along."

Charlie Dunbar was quite ready to accompany her, and in a moment he had

stepped into the canoe after her, and had pushed off, leaving the other two together on the bank.

Lord Wastwater was annoyed. He had in no way sought the interview. On the contrary, he supposed that Patience was with the others on the terrace, and when the men had got up to join them, had purposely asked Charlie Dunbar to show him the way to the boat-house, so that he might avoid her. Now here was a *tête-à-tête* forced upon him, and he was conscious of feeling very strongly the temptation to prolong it. Patience on her side knew that hope was rising strong within her, although she tried hard to crush it. She imagined that he had followed her, and she felt in that sort of excited state when everything

seems possible. So she assented quickly when Lord Wastwater, commenting with a laugh on Julia's rapid departure, proposed that he should take her place in the boat. Soon they were rowing quietly up the river, sitting silent, both occupied with their own thoughts.

"Look," said Lord Wastwater at last, "we have come to the island where the fritillaries grow, — shall we pick some before we go back?"

She nodded, and he ran the boat to the shore and they stepped out. They picked a few flowers and wandered round the island, and at last Patience decided that she would risk the question which had been on her lips for some time past, and ask the meaning of the scene at

the ball. The words she had heard constantly returned to her mind with threatening terror, and the thought that Lord Wastwater might suspect Frank would not leave her. It was better to set her doubts at rest and to ask. So after a silence which had lasted some little time,—for Lord Wastwater on his side was constrained and ill at ease,—she suddenly said, "Lord Wastwater, I want to ask you a question."

He started. "Yes," he said, "what is it?"

They had been walking slowly along the shore of the island under the trees—now she stopped and sat down on a bank; then she said, "I want to know about that man who made a fuss at the ball,—you know who I mean."

Lord Wastwater looked down at the ground steadily. "Yes, what of him?" he said.

"Who was he, and what did he mean?" she asked.

"Why, what did you hear?" he replied, carelessly.

"I thought I heard him say that the knife belonged to you, — the knife——" She spoke quietly, but her heart was beating fast, and she could hardly say the words.

He looked at her curiously: the moonlight was full on her face, but his was in the shadow, so that she could not see it.

He finished the sentence. "The knife with which Mr Goldstein was murdered."

"Yes, that was it," she said, almost in a whisper.

"And you want to know what it meant?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "I couldn't understand. Was it — was it your knife, or what?"

There was still the same curious look on his face as he gazed at her. "As well this way as any other," he thought to himself. Then he said aloud, "Yes, it was my knife."

There was a moment's silence, then she looked at him.

"Then why—— ?" she began.

"Why have I never said so?"

She was still looking at him fixedly, as if she would read his thoughts.

"You did not want the murderer to be discovered?" she said.

He bowed his head.

"Then you know who he is?"

Again the sign of assent.

"And he is——?"

There was a pause: he looked straight at her, and his face was very white.

"You know who he is," he said, just loud enough to be heard.

She pressed her hands to her face. He stood silently looking at her, waiting for her to speak. There was a curious drawn look about his mouth,—a sort of smile half of pity, half of contempt.

Then she spoke. "It is awful," she said. "I feared it; I could not believe it. Oh, it is terrible!"

He stood still by her side, and suddenly she withdrew her hands from her face. It was white, and her eyes were large and shadowy in the half light. She looked up at him with a half pleading gaze.

"It is a fearful thing for you. I am so sorry," and her voice had a deep ring of sympathy in its tone.

A look of surprise crossed his face.

"Then you do not cast me off?" he said.

"You? Oh no; you were right,—the circumstances were too strong for you. And I trust you too; what you do must be right."

Her eyes fell before his as she said the words, and again she hid her face in her hands. But the tension she had

been undergoing had been too great, and her self-control had broken down at last. She burst into a passion of tears, and throwing herself forward with her face buried in her arms she whispered, "Let us go home—I am not well, I am so tired."

He had stood there gazing at her, at first with amazement; then as he heard her words of appeal to him, a light broke over his face, and there came a look of joy, a fierce joy, the joy of triumph. And in a moment of sudden-born passion he caught her in his arms and raised her up, and strained her to his breast, and she felt his kisses on her face.

So they stood for a moment; then he said—

"My darling! my pearl of women! my brave, strong love! You have conquered. I love you, I love you."

The minutes passed on and neither heeded them. In that first crowning moment, when he told her of his love, a lifetime of experience and of joy seemed to be concentrated. She asked for nothing more, she desired nothing more,—the world had vanished, it was of no account. She was carried away by the sense that all she had hardly dared to imagine was hers, and she was carried away by the fire of his passion. He on his side let himself go entirely. The love which had been awakened by Frank's revelation, but which he had repressed, and thought he had conquered, rushed

back with renewed force. But it had in it no purifying quality of unselfishness, of reverence, of worship. It was the only love he could give, and they were his best instincts which told him to trample on it. Now he had yielded to it instead, and thus had once more, and perhaps for the last time, crushed down what was good in his own nature.

But if, through the ecstasy of the moment, she was conscious of some false note, some sense of strangeness, she did not realise it then. The transition from doubt and hesitation to the certainty of happiness overwhelmed her, and she knew nothing save that he existed and that he loved her. So they sat on under the trees, isolated from the world,

alone with the night and with one another.

It was getting late, and Charlie Dunbar and Julia had gone home after a successful flirtation in the canoe. On the terrace were all the company save Lord Wastwater and Patience, and finding they had not returned, Charlie offered to go and look for them.

"I expect they have got hung up somewhere," he said; "the stream is rather difficult to manage in some places."

Fortunately he had seen them start up-stream, so he went that way first, and soon came upon the boat moored to the island. A smile crossed his face as he saw it, and his tact induced him to stay where he was and shout instead of going

to look for them. After a while his shouts were answered, and presently the two appeared.

"We were gathering fritillaries," said Lord Wastwater, as he helped Patience to get into the boat.

"Oh yes," said Charlie, glancing demurely at the very small bunch Lord Wastwater was carrying. "Yes, they're such nice flowers. But it's getting late, you see, and they were rather in a fuss up at the house,—thought you might have got into difficulties. So I came to look."

Lord Wastwater laughed. "Time is a very variable quantity," he said.

"Yes; and we dined late, of course," said Charlie.

Little more was said till they reached

home, when they were greeted with expressions of relief from the assembled company.

"Really," said Mrs Golightly, "we began to think that you had been drowned. Do you know that it's almost twelve o'clock? Quite an unheard-of hour, you know."

"I told Miss De Lisle it would take us a long time to get to the island," said Lord Wastwater, composedly, "but she would go, and I fear the boat did not get on very fast,—I am a poor oarsman."

Mrs Golightly listened civilly to this unblushing lie, and then suggested that it was time to go to bed.

If Mrs Forrest hoped for any further talk with Patience that night, she was

disappointed. The girl said she was very tired, and should go straight to bed. It was obviously true, for she looked deadly white, and there were dark rings under her eyes. Mrs Dearing prescribed hot sal volatile and water, in case a chill had been caught on the river; and after seeing her in bed and administering it with her own hands, she was shrewd enough to go off without asking any questions.

CHAPTER XVII.

A REVELATION.

The white look and the dark rings had not disappeared next morning when Patience came down to breakfast, and Mrs Dearing suggested that she should stay at home and not go to church. This, however, she refused to do, although Lord Wastwater added his arguments to those of Mrs Dearing. Most of the guests walked off to the pretty little church by the river, only Lord Wastwater, Count Hohenstein, and Charlie Dunbar remaining at home.

Julia made an effort to stay with them, but her mother's quick eye detected it, and she was carried off to church with the rest. Patience had spent a wakeful night, and the wave of emotion which had overcome her had as yet in no way spent its force. Nor could she understand her own feelings. Her relations with Lord Wastwater, which should have filled her with joy, still seemed to have something strange and unnatural in them. She had no doubt of herself, of her love for him, and she was sure of his love for her, yet this assurance brought her no peace, no deep calmness of joy. She had entered a new world of experience and feeling, but in it she felt there was a strangeness which the mere fact of her

inexperience could not explain. For in this new world the man she loved was no help, no support,—rather he was the cause of her uneasiness. She could not turn to him for aid, for the strangeness, the terrifying strangeness, was in him. And then there was the awful suspicion of Frank—suspicion, indeed, no longer, for Lord Wastwater's words excluded hope. Yet, might he not be mistaken? Might he not have believed Frank was guilty too readily? Was there not some loop-hole for escape? So she went through the service assailed by thoughts like these, conscious of a deep dread which yet seemed to have no shape, passionately praying that strength might be given her, as if it were not joy but sorrow that she

now had to bear. On the way back she and Mrs Forrest, who were walking together, were joined by Frank. Patience walked on, deep in her own thoughts, while the other two talked, for she felt she could not speak to Frank of indifferent things. Mrs Forrest glanced at her once or twice, but made no comment, and at last they were met by Lord Wastwater. Patience and he soon turned into a side-walk, while the other two went on towards the house.

"Miss De Lisle looks very ill this morning," said Frank, after a moment.

"Yes," answered Mrs Forrest, "she is tired. I think she was out too late last night."

"I think that is very likely," he said.

A pause. Then Mrs Forrest said, "Lord

Wastwater told me last night he was going abroad directly. Are you going with him?"

"Did he say so?" replied Frank. "No; I shall go, but not with him, I think. And I begin to doubt his going."

"Since last night, I suppose?" hazarded Mrs Forrest.

"Yes, since last night."

Another pause.

"I would give anything to prevent it," said Mrs Forrest. "I don't mean his going abroad."

"So would I." And then, "But the matter is in his hands, I fear, and—we can do nothing."

"I have no idea what happened last night; have you?"

"I know nothing, but I have a very definite idea," returned Frank.

Mrs Forrest sighed, and they entered the house.

The company all met at luncheon, and Mrs Golightly began to make plans for the afternoon. "There is lawn-tennis," she said, "and the boats. We don't have the horses and carriages out on Sunday because of the servants, but if any one likes a drive, there is the pony-cart, and me to drive it."

"I vote for boating," said Dunbar, who had visions of another *tête-à-tête* with Julia; "it's too hot for tennis."

"I shall sit in the shade with a book," said Mrs Dearing.

"Much the nicest thing to do," assented

Mrs Gilmersdale. "One never has time to read anything in London."

"Well, there's Daudet's last novel, and the Kreutzer Sonata, two copies, I believe, in the house—one in English and one in French," said Mrs Golightly.

"And what shall you do?" she asked of Mrs Forrest.

"Stay in the garden while it is so hot, and go out boating later. That is what I should like," she returned.

"Very well," said Mrs Golightly, "we'll all stay in the garden, and after tea we'll drive, and boat, and play tennis. Count Hohenstein, didn't you say you wanted to see one of our English castles?"

"There is nothing I should like better," said he.

"Well, then, I'll drive you to Exborough Castle. The Exboroughs are away now, but we can see it. And now that's all settled, and I'll go and get the Kreutzer Sonata for Mrs Dearing. She is longing for it, I see."

The afternoon passed away in talk, and chaff, and laughter. They sat in groups under the trees on the lawn,—some with books on their knees, some lying on the grass without pretence of any occupation. Many were the glances cast at Patience by Lord Wastwater: he was impatient to be alone with her, for their interview in the morning had been interrupted almost at once, and the afternoon seemed interminably long to him. At length tea was over, and the party began to break up. Mrs Golightly and Count Hohenstein went

off together happily in the cart; Julia, Charlie Dunbar, and several others in the boats. "Will you come a walk?" said Lord Wastwater to Patience; "there is a delicious path along the river—I want to show it you." She assented, and they moved away together. For some time Patience was intensely happy. The evening was lovely, cool and delicious after the heat of the day, a soft breeze had sprung up, and the long slanting lights between the trees, and the glow on their stems, seemed to speak of peace and enjoyment. Patience had put away all her fears and her uncertainties, and was living now in the present, conscious only that she was with the man she loved, and that he loved her. And he on his

side was at his best. He had suppressed the ungoverned passion which had frightened even while it delighted her the night before; he treated her with a tenderness which brought to her only joy. So they wandered on along the river between the trees, with no thought for any moment but the present.

But after they had gone some way, Lord Wastwater asked Patience if she would not rest; and finding a comfortable seat for her on a bank, he lay down at her feet. They sat watching the river rushing by in a deep strong stream for a time, till at last the silence was broken by Lord Wastwater.

"My darling," he said, "shall you mind leaving England with me?"

"Leaving England!" she said, in a tone of surprise. "Why should we?"

"Why, you see, I am a little anxious: the police may suspect something."

"Oh, don't talk about that," she said, shivering.

He smiled. "I won't," he said, "only you see I want to know whether you will come with me when I go?"

"I will go with you anywhere," she said.

"And at once?" he asked.

"At once? We cannot be married at once."

"Why not?"

"What a question!" and she laughed. "As if any woman could be married at once!"

"But you see," he said, "it may be urgent. I may have to go away at once. You could join me later if you liked, but I would rather you came with me now."

"But why should you go?" she asked.

"I tell you," he replied, with slight impatience, "that I am afraid of the police."

"The police," she said; "but you have done nothing very wrong, — why should you be afraid?"

"You see," he answered, "after the man recognised me the other night I made a slip. I alluded to having seen him in January, before I was supposed to know what month he had had the knife to clean. The detective is rather a fool in some ways, and he trusts me implicitly"—here an unpleasant smile passed

across his face. "Still, when he thinks it over, he may put things together."

She let her hand rest caressingly on his hair, and he went on.

"I didn't care much then. After all, it is what I wanted; but now that you have given me yourself, my sweet, it is different."

She smiled at him; then, as if recollecting something he had said, asked—

"What you wanted? But you didn't want them to know the knife was yours, did you?"

He laughed. "Ah, you'll hardly understand. There was only one thing I cared for, before I knew I loved you, and that was detective work, so I was working with the detective to find out the murderer."

"You? But I don't understand," she said. "You knew the—the murderer?" her voice sank almost to a whisper.

"Oh yes, I knew him," he said, laughing again; "but it amused me to see what the police made of the case. Some day I shall tell you all about it, and my motives for it, not now. I don't want to talk of it, I only want to tell you I love you."

He put out his arms, half embracing her, and leant his head on her knee. She let her hand rest on it again, but there was a puzzled look in her eyes as she said, "But you didn't want him to be discovered,—you couldn't want that?"

"I don't know what I wanted," he answered,—"something to amuse me, that was all. What does it matter now? I

have found something which fills all time with delight,—I have forgotten everything before last night."

And he rose, and, still kneeling, kissed her.

She put aside the feeling of fear which was creeping over her afresh, and returned his kiss, and for the moment all was again well with her.

"Now," he said, relapsing into his old place at her feet, "you see that I am anxious. I know really that if I want to be quite safe I ought not to stay in England. Look, my darling, will you come with me at once?"

She started. "Come with you at once! what do you mean?"

"Ah, I have frightened you," he said.

"I was afraid I should, and I must, yet I hate it so. I would give anything, anything to have the last three weeks over again. God, what a fool I have been! You might have lived a happy life, here in England, and now . . . But you must have known this, and you will not care. We will go to my island, and there you shall be treated like a queen, like a goddess as you are, my goddess of love!" and he bent forward and passionately kissed her feet.

What was it, this feeling that was overcoming her again, that would not be put aside? Half shrinking back, she said—

"I don't understand; why should we go? what is it that you would have changed? Are you sorry about Thursday night? Do

you think that you can be implicated in the murder?"

She spoke with rising agitation, but he answered lightly, "Of course I think it, that is why I must go. It is only a question of time now. Come, my darling; you were so brave last night, you must not get frightened to-day."

She would not be comforted, but went on, "What is it? There is something I don't understand. Tell me, Hugo, tell me. I must know—I will know!"

Still he answered in the same way. "You know all," he said, "or all you need know. Do not think of the murder, —the man is dead, what does it matter now? Why, I thought you were braver than this. Forget it all—I love you."

There was something horrible in his complete calmness, and she shrank back from the hand he put out to her.

"Dead! it does not matter now!" she repeated. "And you can speak of this horrible cold-blooded murder in this way! Oh, what does it all mean, what does it all mean?"

He looked at her in surprise. "Why do you speak so differently from last night?" he asked; "you did not feel all this then. Are you going to give me up, that you talk in this way of what I did?"

She rose to her feet, her lips white, her eyes wide with horror. "Of what you did!" she said.

"Yes, of what I did. Well, what if

I murdered Goldstein, a brute who deserved to be killed?"

She had fallen back a little, and leant against a tree for support. "You murdered Goldstein?" she said again.

"Well, yes, and you know it. Patience, what is it? Why, I know the way people talk of these things, but you last night were so brave. My love increased a thousand-fold when I saw a woman who could rise above these conventions, and let love rule her utterly."

"I think I am going mad," she whispered. "I supposed it was Frank."

A light flashed across him. "Ah," he said, slowly, "I see: you thought I was shielding Frank?"

"Yes."

"Poor Frank! I never thought of him. It is well for him you have found out your mistake."

"My mistake! Do you mean,—oh you cannot, you cannot mean that it was you, you who killed him!"

She bent forward and seized his hands, looking earnestly into his eyes. He stood quite still, looking at her with a curious expression. Then he said, "Undoubtedly it was I."

She fell back. "But why, why——?"

"Ah, my motives,—they are too long to tell you now. Besides, what do they matter? You will not marry me."

"Marry you!" and she covered her face with her hands.

"And yet I could have made you

happy. I would have loved you as no one else will. And you love me."

"No, not you," she said, looking full in his face,—"what I thought was you, not you."

"And it was what I thought your courage that I loved in you," he said. "I believed that you loved me in spite of what I had done. And now you are like all the others. Patience," he cried, "come with me,—you do love me, I know it. I will love you as never man loved woman before. My darling, come to me, for you are mine."

He was half holding her in his arms, looking down at her face with burning, passionate eyes. But she threw herself back, and freeing herself with an effort, said—

"Be silent! you are a devil. Do not

touch me, do not speak to me. God will help me against you."

For a moment he hesitated, — he was fighting with almost overpowering passion. Then he mastered himself, and he said quite quietly—

"You are very beautiful, perhaps we should have been happy. Well, it is too late." And he turned to leave her.

"Stop," she said; "have you no explanation,—nothing to tell me?"

"Nothing that would change you," he answered. "I shall await my arrest, —that is all." He paused, then added, "Now I am going back,—you had better follow me. I will join you when we get near the house." He turned from her, and disappeared between the trees. Patience

stood motionless for a time,—she was too dazed for thought, her life seemed to have ended a few moments back. Mechanically she looked at her watch. It was past seven. "I must go home," she thought, and she walked slowly on, following Lord Wastwater. Once or twice he stopped at the end of a long vista to see if she were coming. But she did not notice him. Just as they emerged into the garden he joined her, and without a word they entered the house. And the evening shadows fell on the garden, and on the wood where they had sat together.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PATIENCE AND HER FRIEND.

PATIENCE went straight to her own room, and was beginning half mechanically to dress when her aunt came in. She exclaimed at the girl's looks, and Patience confessed to having a very bad headache, which indeed was the exact truth. Mrs Dearing forbade her coming to dinner, and went down to make her excuses,—excuses which Mrs Golightly accepted readily, but with a good deal of private wonder. The dinner passed off well. Lord Wastwater

was apparently in high spirits, and the talk was even more noisy than the night before. At last bed-time came, and after Mrs Dearing had said good-night to Patience, Mrs Forrest went to her room. She found her still dressed, lying on her bed: quietly she came up to her, and, sitting down by her side, began silently to caress her. For a long time Patience made no sign, but at last she said, taking Mrs Forrest's hand in hers, "You are very good to me."

Mrs Forrest bent over her and kissed her.

"Darling, can't you tell me what it is that is making you so unhappy?"

Patience shook her head.

"I see there is something," continued Mrs Forrest, regardless of the negative answer, "and I see it is something very

serious. Won't you tell me? I think it would be better if you did."

She spoke in a low voice, and Patience felt her presence very restful after all the storm she had passed through. But she could not make up her mind to tell her what had happened. So she lay silently there, just showing occasionally by a slight sign that she liked Mrs Forrest's quiet soothing touch. After a little time Mrs Forrest bent down to her again and said—

"Darling, you must talk to some one—you must indeed. Will you tell your aunt what is the matter,—what has happened?"

"No, no," said Patience, "I can't do that."

"Have you been told you must not speak?" asked Mrs Forrest.

Again the girl shook her head.

"Then I think you ought to say what is troubling you."

"You would not believe it," Patience half whispered; "it is horrible! it is incredible!"

"Look," said Mrs Forrest, "let me tell you what I think. Lord Wastwater has told you that he loves you, but that he cannot marry you."

"No, not that," said Patience, sitting up in the bed and looking at her friend with dry, bright eyes,—"not that. He wants to marry me, but—but, oh, I can't say it, it is horrible." And she sank back again, half covering her face with her arm.

Mrs Forrest felt that she must persist, for the girl's state frightened her.

"Patience," she said, "you must tell me. Never mind what it is, you must tell me. It is worse for you to bear it all alone."

The girl looked up at her. "If I do, you won't try to do him any harm?" she said.

"I will do nothing that you do not wish."

"You will promise?"

"Yes."

"And you will tell no one?"

"I promise that too."

But the battle was not over yet. Patience got up and walked to the window, which was wide open, and she leant out for a moment; then she came back, her cheeks flushed, her eyes bright, and throwing herself on her knees by Mrs Forrest's side, she said, "I cannot,—no, I cannot."

"If this goes on," thought Mrs Forrest,

"she will have brain fever." She drew Patience to her and said, "Now, you must tell me: whatever it is, I had better know it. Patience, you must be strong and courageous. You are behaving like a coward."

Patience drew a long breath between her teeth.

"Well, then," she said, "I will tell you." And she began, and there came the history of the last two days, and of the last three weeks: of her love for Lord Wastwater; of the scene at the ball; of the misunderstanding the night before on the island; of the interview that day. It was told incoherently, irregularly, the dates and hours all mixed up and confused, but still Mrs Forrest managed to extract from it the whole story, and when it was ended she knew as

much as Patience herself. Then the girl broke down, and an almost hysterical fit of sobbing followed, which Mrs Forrest was glad to see, for she had begun to fear the results of the tension which Patience was undergoing. After she had got calmer she began to talk of the situation, and at last she said—

"Sometimes I think he must be mad. Can he have done this thing? Is it not possible that his brain is unsettled, and that he thinks he has? Evelyn, do you believe it?"

"I don't know what to believe," she returned, thoughtfully; "but you know we shall discover the truth soon. If he is arrested——"

"I know," said Patience, shuddering;

"of course it will all be discovered then. But if not?"

"If not," said Mrs Forrest, "I think he will go away from England."

"But is it not incredible that he should have done this? What could have been his motive?"

"What impression did he make on you?" asked Mrs Forrest; "did his manner seem strange?"

"Oh no, that was the worst part: it wasn't only his words, it was as if I had seen behind a veil, and there was only wickedness. I can't describe it, but it was a feeling of utter horror. It was like a revelation."

Mrs Forrest said nothing for a minute. Then she began, "Patience, I promised to

say nothing, and if you wish it I won't. But I wish you would let me tell Mark."

"Won't he think he ought to do something,—give information, or something?"

"I think not; there is nothing he can do. It isn't as if there were any evidence. May I tell him?"

"Yes, if he will do nothing about it," said Patience. "But he must not, do you see,—he must not suffer through me."

The excited look was coming back again. "I couldn't bear it," she went on. "I will never see him or speak to him—he frightens me; but oh, I . . ." and she buried her face in the pillows, and soon her whole frame was shaking with sobs. Mrs Forrest said no more, but she busied herself in calming Patience, and at last, after soothing and

quieting her, she succeeded in getting her to undress and go to bed. Then she lay down beside her, and remained quietly thinking over the situation, her main thought being one of relief that she was allowed to speak to Mark. Patience lay awake for a long time, but at last she fell asleep, and Mrs Forrest, after assuring herself that the sleep was sound, went her way back to her own room in the early dawn of the morning.

They were all going back to London after breakfast, but as Mark had to get back by a very early train for business, Mrs Forrest postponed telling him till the evening. She looked in early to see Patience, and was relieved at finding she had slept for three or four hours. The girl

still looked very ill, but the strained expression had gone, and she was evidently better. At breakfast Mrs Golightly announced that Lord Wastwater had had to go by the early train, as he had recollected some business of an important nature in London. She said this with a quick glance at Patience, but her curiosity was not rewarded, for Patience made no sign. And so the guests departed, and the visit came to an end.

In the evening when Mark Forrest came home he found his wife waiting for him.

"Why, I thought you were to be at half a dozen parties!" he said, in a tone of surprise, as he kissed her.

"Yes, but I wanted to see you, Mark, so I stayed at home."

"That's very nice of you; but what do you want to see me about? There must be something," he said, laughing.

"Well, there is," she said, "and it's something very serious."

"Well, what is it? have you discovered what's the matter with Patience? You had lots of time last night."

"Ah, it's no joking matter," she answered, gravely, so that his manner changed at once.

"What is it?" he asked.

"First, tell me if you travelled up with Lord Wastwater this morning?"

"Yes, I did."

"Did he seem at all strange or unlike himself?"

"No, not at all."

"It is very extraordinary," said Mrs Forrest.

"Well, but what is it?" said Mark, impatiently; "what is extraordinary? what has happened?"

"Do you want to know who murdered Mr Goldstein?" she asked.

"Murdered Goldstein! Of course; but why? What is the matter with you, Evelyn?" he said.

"Well, it's Lord Wastwater."

"Lord Wastwater!"

"He says so himself."

"Says so himself! I think you're all mad," said Mark. "What is the good of these mysteries? Just tell me the facts."

"First, tell me if you think it im-

possible that Lord Wastwater should have murdered Mr Goldstein," she said.

"I think nothing impossible," returned he, with impatience; "I think it unlikely. Why should he?"

"Well, I'll tell you all the story," she said.

"I think that's the best thing you can do," he returned.

"You know I told you a fortnight ago that I feared Patience was in love with Lord Wastwater," she began. Mark nodded. "Well, it seems she discovered it also, and it made her very unhappy, for she had thought it was only friendship."

"Of course," interposed Mark.

"She is a plucky and a good girl," went on Mrs Forrest, "and she determined she would get over this feeling. But

at the ball at Wastwater House he was quite different from what he had been before."

"He had probably found it out too," said Mark.

"And she began to think perhaps he might care about her. Then came that odd scene with the man and the knife that we heard about, you know,—every one tells a different version,—and this puzzled her a good deal. But she thought that perhaps it was Frank Murchison who had committed the murder, and that Lord Wastwater, in not recognising the knife, was trying to shield him."

Mark had now become extraordinarily attentive, and his expression was getting very grave. She went on—

"At Ashcroft Lord Wastwater and

Patience went out on Saturday evening, as you know, to that island, and there Patience asked him what the scene at the ball meant. Then there was a misunderstanding. Patience thought Lord Wastwater was shielding Frank, and he seems really to have believed that she understood he had committed the murder himself. Then he proposed to her, and she accepted him, of course in absolute ignorance of what he thought. She does not appear to have been happy, however. In some way he seems to have repelled her all the time, although she was very much in love with him. Then yesterday they had a walk after tea, and here the mistake was cleared up: it must have been a terrible scene. But she discovered,

without doubt, she says, that he had killed Mr Goldstein, and that he thought she looked upon the act with indifference. He told her without the least appearance of remorse, and did not understand her horror. That is the situation."

Mark had listened to this story with deep attention. When it was over he said nothing for a moment; then he asked—

"You believe all this happened?"

"Believe it! yes, I am afraid I do," she replied.

"I mean, you don't think she was hysterical, and imagined things?"

Mrs Forrest shook her head. "Oh no. She was terribly excited and moved, of course, but I have no doubt he told her

all she said he did. He may be mad. That is the only explanation which occurs to me."

"No; it is far more likely that it is true," said Mark, after a moment.

"It seems so impossible," said his wife, with a shiver. "Mark, it can't, it can't be true!"

"Yes, it can," returned Mark shortly. "But the question now is, What am I to do?"

"I promised you should do nothing to injure him in any way," said Mrs Forrest, quickly.

Again Mark paused and looked thoughtfully before him. "I wonder if he will leave England?" he said.

"He told me on Saturday that he was going at once," said Mrs Forrest.

"What will happen to her if the whole thing comes to light?" asked Mark.

The tears came into Mrs Forrest's eyes. "I don't know how she would stand it," she said. "Mark, can't you get him to go?"

A half smile crossed Mark's face. "Not a very nice position for me," he said.

"Oh, but never mind," she answered, coming up to him and laying her cheek against his arm. "We must help Patience; we must do all we can for her."

"If I only knew his motive," said Mark. "She said nothing about that, did she?"

"Not a word," said Mrs Forrest.

Mark stared gloomily before him. "The fact is, she oughtn't to have told you at all," he said.

"No one could have helped it," she returned. "If you'd seen her, Mark, you wouldn't have wondered. She must have spoken to some one, poor darling. And she was sorry, I know, this morning, although she didn't say so. She thought she oughtn't to have spoken."

"How do you know?" asked Mark.

"Oh, well, of course from her manner, —I can't tell you how exactly; but I'm sure of it—one is, you know. But never mind that. What are you going to do? that's the question. You *must* help her."

He patted her cheek. "I'll do what I can," he said. "I must try and find out something more first. But I can't honestly say I like it."

CHAPTER XIX.

ROKE IS ENLIGHTENED.

After Roke had left Wastwater House on the memorable Thursday night, he drove straight back to his own home. His wife was expecting him, in consequence of a telegram he had sent off to her earlier in the day, and a little slip of a room had been prepared for Ryder. Roke told his wife that he had some work to do, and after seeing Ryder safely disposed of, he went to his room down-stairs. He took from a locked drawer a set of

papers containing memoranda about the murder, also the knife, the half-smoked cigar, and other things, and sitting down he proceeded to study them carefully. It took him a long time, and after he had finished he remained for a while longer deep in thought, occasionally jotting down a few sentences on a piece of paper. Then he got up, locked away the papers, lighted his candle, and went off to bed.

He spent the next two or three days in various researches. He visited the shops of several cigar-merchants; he paid another visit to Jenny Allen; and at last, on Tuesday morning, he repaired to Scotland Yard and asked for the chief of the detective department. He was pres-

ently shown to his office, and the chief looked up as he entered.

"Well, Roke, any news?" he asked.

"There is news, sir," said Roke, slowly; "if I'm right, very strange news. But I don't think I can be right."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the chief, quickly.

"Well, I suspect some one," answered Roke.

"Sit down and tell me who it is, then," said the other.

"The most unlikely person you can think of," said Roke, taking his place on the other side of the large writing-table at which his superior was sitting.

"Well, but his name," said the chief, impatiently.

"Lord Wastwater, sir."

The other gave a low whistle.

"You don't seem surprised," said Roke, quickly.

"More unlikely things have happened," rejoined the chief. "But go on; why do you suspect him?"

Roke then told in detail all that had occurred up to the night of the ball, when his suspicions were first aroused by Lord Wastwater's inexplicable knowledge of the time in which Ryder had the knife to clean. Another startling discovery had shortly followed. He had shown the cigar which was found in Mr Goldstein's room to a tobacconist, who had at once pronounced it to be a West Indian brand of a very rare sort, likely to be sold only

at one or two shops in London. Roke went to those he mentioned, and found that at one of them it was recognised as belonging to a brand of which they had the sole monopoly. Very few cigars came over, and they were invariably all ordered beforehand. It was some time since the last consignment had arrived. "I asked to whom they had been supplied," continued Roke, "and they mentioned the names of three men. Two, as I have ascertained, are out of England; the third is Lord Wastwater. Then I went down to see Jenny Allen, and having set her mind at rest about Kennett, I made her describe to me very carefully the man she saw that night. She did so, and she dwelt on the fact that he

walked with his head thrown back,—a peculiarity of Lord Wastwater's. She believes she should recognise the man." Roke stopped.

"No more evidence?" asked the chief, who had been listening carefully.

"No more at present," said Roke. "I thought I had better come at once. Lord Wastwater may take the alarm, and then——"

"Yes," said the chief, "he may. Yet all this is hardly evidence enough. Have you searched the house?"

"Not yet," said Roke.

"Must be done."

"We shall find nothing," said Roke. "He will be far too cautious. No one knows better than he what is evidence

and what isn't. It's all very well," he burst out, "I can't believe it! It's impossible! Why should he have done this?"

The chief glanced quickly at him. "Why is it impossible?"

"Why, what on earth should a man like him do it for?" replied Roke. "After all, every murder must have a motive. He had none that I can see."

"Well, well," said the other, "perhaps we shall find one as we go on. Meanwhile there's one link that by great good luck I can add." He rang a bell, and said to the man who entered, "Send Fellowes here. Now," he went on, "before he comes, just tell me how far Lord Wastwater knows what has been done."

Roke made a full explanation, and had

just finished when a stalwart policeman entered the room.

"You were footman in Lord Wastwater's house, I think?" said the chief.

"I was, sir."

"When was that?"

"I was there a year and a half, sir. I left last summer."

"Were you at Hatton Towers in October 18—?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was Mr Goldstein staying there then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you hear any conversation about a knife between Lord Wastwater and Mr Goldstein?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, tell us what it was."

"I was in the library one morning, putting up some books for his lordship, when Mr Goldstein came in with something in his hand. He said, 'Here's your knife back, Wastwater,' or something of that sort. Lord Wastwater said, 'Have you had it copied?' Mr Goldstein said, 'No; they say it's too difficult. Never mind.' Lord Wastwater took it up and said, 'I'm sorry I can't part with it; it's a favourite of mine, or I'd give it you.' And then the gentlemen went away. I had a look at the knife afterwards. It's the same that I saw at the inquest the other day. I should know it anywhere."

"Do you want to ask him any more?" said the chief.

Roke shook his head.

"Then you can go now," said the chief, and after the policeman had left the room he went on, "That establishes the fact that the knife is Lord Wastwater's, and that Mr Goldstein brought it back from the Lakes with him, you see."

"I see, sir," said Roke. "Well, the nearer we get to Lord Wastwater the more mysterious the whole thing becomes, or so it seems to me."

"Yes; but one can't judge of Lord Wastwater like other men," returned the chief. "I know something of him. In investigating this case, I should put all idea of probability out of my head as far as Lord Wastwater's motives are concerned. Let's see where we are. First, we have the fact that the knife with

which Mr Goldstein was killed belongs to Lord Wastwater. Well, of course it may have been taken by some one. Then we find that the cigar left in the room was one of a sort supplied to Lord Wastwater. That, too, may have been taken by some one. Then Jenny Allen describes the man she saw as in some ways resembling Lord Wastwater. Well, she may be mistaken. Then—and what I think most important of all—Mr Goldstein was certainly murdered by some one he knew quite well and trusted, and probably by some one who was an acquaintance. Now, these facts point to two people. One is Lord Wastwater, the other—Murchison."

Roke sat silent, and after a moment the other went on, "You don't seem

to have suspected Murchison at all gravely?"

"Well, no, sir, I never have," said Roke. "For one thing, he has no beard, and he's not so tall a man as Jenny Allen described; but what I go most by, perhaps, he don't give me the idea of a man likely to commit such a murder as this."

"And Lord Wastwater does?" asked the other.

"Well, no, not quite that; and yet——" and Roke stopped.

The chief looked at him keenly, and then said—

"To my mind these facts point to Lord Wastwater definitely. I, like you, do not suspect Murchison."

Roke drummed on the table before him half impatiently. "Very well," he said at last; "is he to be arrested at once?"

"Ah," returned the other, "that's another matter. If we arrest a man in Lord Wastwater's position and fail to prove our case, it will be an unpleasant business. How about an *alibi*? Did he ever speak of his proceedings on the night of the murder?"

Roke considered for a moment. "Yes," he said, with some hesitation, "I recollect he said he had come in about twelve that night. We were talking of Mr Murchison, and he said he had not seen him."

"And the murder was committed between 11.30 and 12?"

"So we suppose," said Roke.

"There may be an *alibi*, of course," said the chief. "We shall have to risk it. Well, now you want to know what to do. You had better bring Jenny Allen up to town and let her see Lord Wastwater, — without his knowledge, of course. You will be able to manage this. If she says she can swear to him, I think we may go on; if not, we must seek for further evidence first."

"Very well, sir," said Roke, rather gloomily, "that shall be done."

"Let's see, — the coroner's jury have given their verdict, haven't they?" asked the chief.

"Yes, sir. Wilful murder by person or persons unknown," returned Roke. "It was no use waiting for more evidence."

"Ah, well, let Jenny Allen see Lord Wastwater, and at once," said the chief, with emphasis.

Roke walked off in a rather depressed mood. He was in a way attached to Lord Wastwater, and was thoroughly disinclined to believe that he had committed the murder. Besides, he held firmly to the theory that there must be a motive for every crime, and not seeing any motive in this case, he was disposed to think that there had been no crime either. As he meditated, however, a thought struck him, and jumping into a hansom he told the man to drive to Preston Square. "If I could find any angry correspondence, or anything," he thought, "it would make it more possible.

I have looked through the papers, but maybe I've missed something." When he arrived he told Smithson he had come to see once more all the papers which were on Mr Goldstein's table the night of the murder. He unlocked the study, and found all the papers as he had left them. "All right," he said, "you can leave me—I shall be some little time."

Smithson retired, and Roke, after a quick glance through the papers, turned his attention to the writing-table, and opening the locked drawers, he proceeded to examine again the various letters he found there. His search, however, was fruitless, and he was about to give it up when Smithson reappeared.

"There's a few letters here," he began, "as I found in one of Mr Goldstein's coat-pockets. He was always a bad hand at leaving his letters about, was my poor master; many's the one that have come down to be brushed. Maybe you'd like to look at these."

Roke took them. They were just a few letters which had evidently been stuffed into the pocket when they were received. He glanced at the first—it was an invitation to dinner; the second was a bill, so was the third. But as he took up the fourth, Roke's heart gave a great bound. It ran thus:—

"*Monday, May* 31, 18—

"DEAR GOLDSTEIN,—Very well, I am glad the hour suits you. I will be with

you to-morrow night between 11.30 and 12, and will come through the garden.—Yrs., WASTWATER."

Roke looked up; his eyes met those of Smithson, who was watching him.

"Ah," he said, "nothing of great importance, but it's as well to have them. There are no more?"

"That's all," said Smithson.

"And enough too," thought Roke as he left the house. He went to the nearest telegraph station, and sent a telegram to Jenny Allen: "Come to London at once. Will meet you at Paddington at 6.45." Then he went on to the Law Courts, where he had some other business. The first person he ran against in the hall

was Mark Forrest, whom he knew slightly. As soon as Mark saw him he went up to him and said,—

"Oh, Mr Roke, I am glad to have met you."

"Me, sir! why? Anything on business?" rejoined Roke.

"Not exactly. I want to know the truth of this odd occurrence at Wastwater House the other night."

Mark said this with every appearance of unconcern, but he was watching Roke closely, and he saw him look impenetrable the moment he heard the question.

He answered airily, "Oh, a mere mistake —a man I thought might give some information in the Goldstein case. He was drunk—a great pity, it made such a scene."

"People are saying that he identified half a dozen men as Goldstein's murderer," said Forrest.

"Are they?" rejoined Roke. "Well, we can't arrest half a dozen, you know," and he tried to pass on.

"Stop a minute," said Mark, laying a hand on his arm. "There's a strong impression about that you've got what they call a clue, and that some one is going to be arrested. Some say it's Murchison, some De Lisle, some Lord Wastwater. What do you say?"

"I say," returned Roke, laughing, "that you are a more simple man than I took you for, Mr Forrest. But I fear I must go, I am in a hurry. Good morning."

Mark looked after him. "You have

your face well under control, my good friend," he thought, "but the muscles of your arms tell their story. There was an unmistakable twitch as I said the last of those three names. Well, I suppose the end will come soon, then. I must warn him to-night."

A few hours afterwards Mark drove up to Wastwater House, and was ushered in to the library. Lord Wastwater was standing at the window looking out into the garden and smoking, but he turned as Mark was announced and came to meet him.

"Ah, Forrest," he said, "what brings you here to see me?"

Mark Forrest was by nature a shy man, and intensely disliked interfering in other people's business. His present errand

was profoundly distasteful to him, and it was only his strong sense of the gravity of the situation which had induced him to undertake it. Still he had made up his mind and he meant to carry it through, so he began perfectly simply.

"Perhaps you will think I am interfering in what is no business of mine, but I have come to tell you that you are in danger."

Lord Wastwater looked at him.

"A startling beginning," he said, coolly. "Won't you sit down, then you can tell me what the danger is."

"No, thanks," said Mark; "what I have to say won't take long. I repeat that you are in danger, and you had better leave England."

Lord Wastwater leant against the chimneypiece and continued to smoke.

"Yes; is that all?" he said after a pause.

"I can say more if you like," said Forrest, "but I think you probably understand."

"Perhaps," said Lord Wastwater, with a slight smile, "but I am not sure that you do. What do you think I have to fear?"

"Arrest," said Mark.

"Yes; and then?"

Mark shrugged his shoulders. "Very likely I don't understand," he said, "but that is because you choose to be mysterious. All I know is that Roke suspects you of——"

"Yes," said Lord Wastwater.

"Being concerned in Goldstein's murder."

Lord Wastwater considered for a moment. "Your information comes from Mrs Forrest, I presume."

Mark was getting annoyed at the cool indifference of his manner. "Miss De Lisle told my wife the purport of your conversation with her at Ashcroft, and my wife repeated it to me, on condition," he added quickly, seeing a smile on Lord Wastwater's face, "that the information should in no way be used against you. Then I met Roke, and from the way he answered, or rather refused to answer, my questions, I see that he suspects you. My impression is that if you remain in England you will be arrested in a very short time."

"Yes," said Lord Wastwater, "that is my impression also."

"Then why don't you go?" asked Forrest.

"Really, you have very odd views for a barrister," returned Lord Wastwater. "Does it not occur to you that I may be acquitted?"

"Then it is not true?"

"Of course it will not be true if I am acquitted," returned Lord Wastwater. "Did you ever know justice miscarry in England? And I shall be acquitted."

Mark remained silent for a few seconds, then he said, "Well, I have done my best; if I can help you let me know."

"You are very kind," said Lord Wastwater, "but I shall defend myself—that

is, if it is necessary, which, after all, is doubtful."

Mark lingered another second, and then, as if making up his mind that any further effort was useless, he said "Good-bye" abruptly, and left the room.

"There is nothing now to do but to wait," he said to his wife afterwards. "Perhaps he has some explanation we don't know of. But we shall know, for he is sure to be arrested."

But after Mark had left him Lord Wastwater stood for a long time at the window looking into the garden,—looking at the place where he had sat with Patience on the night of the ball. Then he came back to the writing-table, sat down, and wrote. It was a letter of some

length, and when it was finished he sealed it up, addressed it, and enclosed it in another envelope. This he also addressed, and left upon the table. Then he took his hat and went out.

On the Thursday the evening papers contained the following headings: "The Goldstein Murder." "Arrest of a Nobleman of High Rank." "Great Sensation in London." "Accused before the Magistrate."

CHAPTER XX.

SUSPENSE.

On Friday afternoon Mrs Dearing and Frank Murchison were sitting together in the drawing-room in Berkeley Square. They were awaiting Mark Forrest's return from the police court with the news of what had happened. Lord Wastwater had been brought up the day before and had been remanded, and on the morning of the present day he was to be before the magistrate again. Poor Mrs Dearing looked very piteous and sorrowful: she

had heard nothing of the history of the Ashcroft visit until Lord Wastwater's arrest, when, by Mark's advice, Mrs Forrest had told her. The tears stood in the old lady's eyes as she spoke to Frank of Patience, and occasionally one trickled down her cheek and was lost in the folds of lace in front of her gown. They had been talking for some time when the door opened, and Mrs Forrest came in.

Murchison jumped up quickly. "How is Patience?" he asked.

"She thinks she may sleep a little," said Mrs Forrest. "I've told her I don't expect Mark till five,—I didn't want her to have this suspense. She is tired out with crying, poor darling; but it is best she should cry, you know—it is natural."

And she looked at Frank with sympathy. He turned away half impatiently, half pitifully, and walking to the other end of the room, stared vacantly at a picture. Then he came back.

"You know I have only just returned," he said. "I was away in Hampshire—I knew nothing. I was almost stunned when I got the news. Mrs Dearing has told me that ——told me something about Ashcroft."

"Then you know that he asked Patience to marry him?" said Mrs Forrest.

Frank nodded; he could hardly trust himself to speak.

"And that there was an explanation of some kind, which made it impossible, and which we think had something to do with this murder?"

This was what it had been thought best to tell Mrs Dearing.

Again Frank nodded.

"And then, you see, his arrest came yesterday. Luckily Mark heard it directly and told me, so I was able to tell her gently. Don't let's speak of it," she went on, with a catch in her voice; "I can't do it. And she has been very wonderful. She is so good."

There was silence. Mrs Dearing had given up the attempt to appear calm, and was crying quietly.

Frank went and looked out of the window. At last he turned and said, "There's a hansom coming—I think Mark is in it." And in another moment the cab drove up, and soon Mark and St

Buryans entered the room. They all looked up in inquiry.

"He is committed for trial," said Mark.

A murmur followed, then Murchison asked whether the evidence against him was very strong.

"Well, it is and it isn't," said Mark. "There is a great deal that is very grave, but it is all circumstantial, and there may be an explanation. He reserves his defence."

"What was he like in court?" asked Murchison.

"Just as usual," said Mark. "He listened coolly to the witnesses, — one would have thought him quite indifferent. Well, we shall know more when the trial takes place." And he threw himself into

a chair, and stared moodily in front of him.

"Will that be soon?" asked his wife.

"In about four or five weeks, I suppose," said Mark.

"Where will he be tried?" asked Mrs Dearing. "Before the House of Lords?"

"Oh no," returned Mark; "probably at the Old Bailey."

"Oh, of course; I forgot," said Mrs Dearing, — "only peers are tried before the House of Lords. I almost wish the old Duke would die, then there would be a State trial. This is so disgraceful."

St Buryans was sitting down, leaning forward with his head in his hands. "Do you really think he did it?" he asked, suddenly. "It seems to me impossible."

"There may be something we don't know," said Mark. "I can't tell anything about it, or about him. Murchison, what do you think?"

"For God's sake, don't ask me!" returned Frank. "I try not to think."

"And Patience," asked St Buryans of Mrs Dearing,—"does she mind? People are saying she was engaged to him."

"No, not that," said Mrs Dearing; "but he was a — a great friend. She is in terrible grief. Oh, he can't have done it!" she exclaimed for about the sixth time that afternoon. "Why should he? He can have had no motive. Why should he?"

Forrest looked up. "I wonder," he said, "whether it is a good thing he should

defend himself. He is going to do it, I hear."

"I am sure it is," said Murchison, eagerly. "He will know exactly what to do. I wish I'd seen him," he went on; "I feel such a brute for not believing him absolutely innocent. If I had seen him I should have asked him. He would have told me the truth."

Mark thought of his fruitless interview with Lord Wastwater and was silent, and a second afterwards Murchison got up to go. Just as he was leaving the room, however, the door opened and De Lisle entered with another man, whom Frank recognised at once as Payne. De Lisle nodded slightly to Murchison and passed on, while Frank, after a moment's hesita-

tion, went on down the stairs. Bobby came in and shook hands, then he said, "I met Mr Payne on the door-step, and brought him in. It seems he has some business with you, Aunt Almira."

He spoke lightly, and his tone jarred on the people assembled in the room.

"I hear Lord Wastwater has been committed," he went on.

"Yes," returned Mark, shortly.

"I've no doubt of his guilt, have you?" asked Bobby.

"I never prejudge these things," answered Mark.

Meanwhile, Payne was speaking to Mrs Dearing. He had drawn from his pocket a letter, which he was giving her. De Lisle's quick eye caught it, and he

said, approaching the two, "Ah, Mr Payne, this is your business then!"

A look of unmistakable annoyance crossed Payne's face, and he said, "A solicitor's communications are private, you know, Mr De Lisle."

"Yes; but that letter is addressed to my sister," said Bobby, who had caught sight of the direction, "and I'm not sure that, as I'm her guardian, you oughtn't to have given it to me. But never mind."

Payne took no notice whatever of this speech, but leading the way, retired with Mrs Dearing to another part of the room, where he gave her the letter.

"Lord Wastwater sent it to me two days ago," he said, "but I was away

from home. So it arrived yesterday morning, and it was only to-day that the news of the arrest reached me in the country. I came up at once, thinking it best to deliver it into her hands or into yours. I rather expected to have heard from Lord Wastwater about all this matter, but I have not."

He ended rather wistfully, and Mrs Dearing answered, "He is going to defend himself, I believe."

"Ah," said Payne; "well, perhaps it is best. But this letter, you will give it to Miss De Lisle at once? Here is his covering letter to me," and he handed her a note which ran as follows:—

"DEAR PAYNE,—I enclose a letter for

Miss De Lisle. You are to send it to her at once if anything happens to me —not otherwise. Be a good fellow, and ask me no questions.—Yours ever,

"WASTWATER."

Mrs Dearing gave back the letter, and beckoned to Mrs Forrest. "Can you take this to Patience at once, dear?" she said; "and you had better tell her what your husband says." Then she turned to Payne. "You don't think he has done it, do you?" she said.

"My dear Mrs Dearing, I know absolutely no particulars. I have come straight from the station. But certainly, I fully hope he can prove his innocence—I fully hope it."

"I suppose the police would not have arrested him without strong suspicion?" said Mrs Dearing.

"Yes; oh yes, there must have been that," said Payne. "But, Mrs Forrest," he went on to that lady, who had waited for his answer, "I must ask you one thing—I must have an acknowledgment from Miss De Lisle that she has received that letter. Will you see to this?"

Mrs Forrest assented, and left the room with the letter.

De Lisle, who had been watching the proceedings from a distance, now came up. "Sent the letter to Patience, have you?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mrs Dearing, "Evelyn has taken it to her."

"Is Patience coming down?" asked Bobby. "I want to see her. Shall I go up to her?"

"Patience has a bad headache," said Mrs Dearing, hurriedly, conscious that her brother was the last person Patience would wish to see; "she can't see any one this afternoon."

"Oh," said Bobby, in a dissatisfied voice; "is it grief at the mess her friend Lord Wastwater's got into, I wonder? A nice thing to happen to a man. I suppose he did it, didn't he?" he went on to Payne.

"Lord Wastwater is one of my oldest friends," returned the latter, and he walked off to Mark Forrest, and began talking to him, and after a moment they went off together.

Then De Lisle, seeing that nothing further was to be gained by staying, tried to induce St Buryans to go with him to the club, but St Buryans refused, and Bobby finally took himself off in a very bad humour. His dislike of Lord Wastwater had only increased lately: he had not forgiven the somewhat contemptuous way in which he had been treated after his quarrel with Murchison; and he was extremely angry at the obvious interest in Lord Wastwater shown by Patience. "I most earnestly hope he'll be hanged," he said to himself, as he walked down St James's Street. "If he don't deserve it for this, he does, no doubt, for other things. An intolerable fellow."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TRIAL.

Lord Wastwater's arrest had caused a sensation in London which far exceeded anything that had been known of late years. Public curiosity had been deeply excited by Mr Goldstein's murder, and all sorts of speculations as to the mystery were rife. Some suspected Kennett, some De Lisle, a few Murchison; and there were many who believed that the real murderer had not yet been heard of, but that he existed in the person of a fourth man

who had entered Mr Goldstein's house on the night of the 1st of June, after the three others had left it. But when it was rumoured that the fourth man had been found, and that he was Lord Wastwater, the excitement knew no bounds. Nothing else was talked of: all classes alike were engaged in discussing the chances of his guilt or of his innocence, and the trial was awaited with unparalleled anxiety. As the time drew near, it became known that the trial would take place at the Central Criminal Court of the Old Bailey, before Mr Justice Maddox; that the Crown would be represented by the Attorney-General; and that Lord Wastwater would defend himself. At once letters began to pour in from people who wished to hear the trial.

Peeresses, professional beauties, actors, members of Parliament, all sorts and conditions of men and women, wrote begging, commanding, imploring every one with any interest to give them a place in court. On the day of the trial the doors were besieged from an early hour, and very soon the most urgent entreaties and the largest bribes were unable to procure a seat.

Murchison and St Buryans were sitting together in a corner of one of the galleries, and from where they sat they had a full view of the court,—of the old-fashioned high dock, of the desk at which sat the barristers, and of the jury-box opposite them, and the witness-box close to it. Below, in the crowd of barristers, they could

distinguish Mark Forrest, but Murchison's eye travelled beyond him to a remote corner of the bench where there sat a strange figure of a very old man, shrunken and withered, but with keen piercing eyes under overhanging brows. He had been helped into his seat by a servant, for he was unable to walk; and now he sat there almost in a heap, his eyes seemingly the only living thing about him. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, however, but only concentrated his attention on the dock and the staircase up which the prisoner would come.

By degrees the notice of those in the court became attracted to the old man who sat there so silently, and people began to look at him with wondering surprise.

There was something strange yet repellent in him as he sat there, his small shrunken form telling so plainly of age and infirmity, and the eyes, still so full of life and vigour, keenly intent on some purpose, and yet with an evil look in them as if the purpose were in some way malignant. It seemed as if the glance he fixed on the dark aperture in the court were intended to draw Lord Wastwater forth till he stood in the dock: it was full of a malicious triumph, of a sinister joy. And by degrees it began to be whispered among the people who were waiting that this was the old Duke of Beverley, Lord Wastwater's father.

Few present could remember him in the height of his power and vigour, when he was the central figure in London so-

ciety; but many knew of his evil reputation, and of the stories about him, which had not yet entirely died out. He himself had disappeared from London years ago, and had become a name to people and nothing more. Yet now he had undoubtedly emerged from his seclusion, and was here present at the trial of his only son. Soon those watching him saw the glitter in his eyes brighten, and in a moment the door opened and Lord Wastwater's tall figure emerged and entered the dock. He stood there raised above the crowd, solitary and composed; and as he looked round the crowded court his eyes fell on one well-known face after another. A smile crossed his face, but it faded as his glance fell on the corner

in which were sitting Frank and St Buryans. He looked at them for a moment and then turned away. As he did so his attention was arrested by the old man, and he gave a slight start, for he met the keen eyes fixed directly on him. He returned the look with one like it,—for a moment the expression of the two men was the same; and then he turned away, looked calmly at the judge, and awaited the beginning of the proceedings.

Mr Justice Maddox, who had just taken his place, had not been very long on the bench: he was a tall thin man, with a narrow stern face, and he had already won the reputation of being a severe judge. The preliminary proceedings were gone through, and soon all present were

listening to the Attorney-General, who, in an opening speech which lasted for rather over an hour, proved conclusively to the larger part, especially the feminine part, of the audience, that Lord Wastwater had murdered Mr Goldstein.

The indictment against Lord Wastwater rested, said the Attorney-General, on the following facts—all of which he was prepared to prove. On the night of the 1st of June Mr Goldstein was alone and perfectly well at 11.30. After that hour a man visited him who must have been on friendly terms with him, for he smoked a cigar. This man left the house shortly before twelve, as would be proved, and it was very probable that death had taken place about that hour. It would be proved

that the man who left the house was Lord Wastwater; that the man who smoked cigars similar to the one found in Mr Goldstein's room was Lord Wastwater; that the knife with which Mr Goldstein was murdered belonged to Lord Wastwater; and that he had an appointment with Mr Goldstein at that very hour on that very evening. It was a cowardly, treacherous murder, perpetrated on an unsuspecting man, by one who had come to see him as a friend, and the evidence, although purely circumstantial, as was inevitable, pointed clearly to Lord Wastwater as the criminal. No doubt it was well planned,—the hour, the solitude, and the conditions were favourable; but even the cleverest criminals make mistakes, and a slip of the tongue,

by which the prisoner showed that he knew something about the knife, had given a clue to the police which they had successfully followed up.

Lord Wastwater listened with attention, but quite unmoved, to this speech, only occasionally making a few notes. Then after luncheon the witnesses began. After the police constable who arrested Lord Wastwater had given evidence, the housemaid and footman swore to finding the body. The footman's evidence showed that he had gone into the study the night before at 11.30 and had found Mr Goldstein alone; that the window was still open; and that on a little table near the fire was a pile of bank-notes, which by Mr Goldstein's orders he had removed

and given to him; that in the morning there lay on the same table a half-burnt cigar and a good deal of ash.

At the end of the examination-in-chief Lord Wastwater asked, "Are you sure you did not go into the study after 11.30?"

"Certain, my lord."

"What did you do?"

"I went to bed at once, my lord."

"Was it Mr Goldstein's habit to sit up late?"

"Yes, it was, my lord."

"Did people sometimes come to see him quite late?"

"Yes, they did sometimes."

"And they came through the garden?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"So that it was no uncommon thing for you to find people there whom you had not let in?"

"It did not happen very often."

"But it did sometimes?"

"Oh yes, my lord."

"Mr Goldstein sometimes came in through the garden himself?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Was the garden-gate locked that evening?"

"No; it was left unlocked by Mr Goldstein's orders."

"It was locked generally?"

"Yes, but Mr Goldstein had a key."

"So that he could always unlock it if he wished?"

"Yes, my lord."

The next witness was the doctor, who stated that he had been called in to see Mr Goldstein about 8 A.M. on the 1st of June; that he had found him quite dead; that the cause of death was a long sharp instrument thrust into the back of the neck, probably while the victim's head was bent down. Death had been almost instantaneous, and had probably taken place some hours before he saw the body. The murder must have been committed by some one standing behind Mr Goldstein.

"Now, about the time of the murder," asked Lord Wastwater, "can you swear to the hour?"

"Mr Goldstein must have been dead some hours when I saw the body."

"What hour did you examine it?"

"Half-past eight."

"Do you think he was not alive at half-past twelve?"

The doctor thought for a moment. "I cannot be certain as to the time. He had been dead some hours."

"So that the murder may have been committed at any time between 11.30 and about one o'clock?"

"The appearances were consistent with that."

The next witness was the cigar merchant, who swore that the cigar found in Mr Goldstein's room belonged to a special brand, of which only a few cigars were made. He had received a consignment of these cigars the year before, but

owing to a bad season, it was a very small one. Lord Wastwater had received the whole of the quantity sent. The previous year he had supplied some half-dozen customers with the same kind of cigars.

Lord Wastwater declined to cross-examine this witness.

Ryder was now called, and swore that on the evening of January 8th a man had come into his shop and had given him a knife to clean. That knife was the one with which Mr Goldstein had been murdered. He had taken off the two little silver plates which were on the side of the knife and had renewed the screws. He had filled up the holes which the plates covered with some scraps of thin paper torn from a bill,

and had replaced the silver plates. The man who came with the knife and called for it was Lord Wastwater.

To this witness Lord Wastwater put only two questions. "Did this man come to you disguised, or with any concealment?" he asked.

"No, I cannot say that," Ryder answered. "He did not give his name."

"It is not an uncommon thing, is it, for people to leave something with you and call for it again without leaving a name?"

"Oh no; it happens sometimes, certainly."

Jenny Allen was next examined. She said she had found herself homeless in London on the night of June 1st. She had sat down with her child on a door-

step in John Street, nearly opposite the garden-gate of No 13 Preston Square. About 11.20 she had noticed two men coming out of the gate, — they were on the opposite side of the street, and walked away. Soon after a man came up, passed her, crossed the street, and entered the garden. He was absent about twenty minutes. Then he came out, crossed the street again, and spoke to her. He asked why she did not go home. She answered that she had none. He asked if she had no friends. She said they were a long way off in the country. Then he gave her a sovereign and told her to go back to her friends, and walked away without waiting to be thanked.

She was then asked whether the prisoner was the man who spoke to her, and at this question the witness broke down. After a great deal of difficulty and distress, however, she was understood to say clearly that she believed he was the man.

Lord Wastwater began his cross-examination by asking her once more if she were sure he was the man. The witness began to cry again, but at last said "Yes."

"And did this man exhibit any signs of agitation, or did he speak quietly?"

"Oh, he spoke quite quietly, my lord."

"Did he seem in a hurry to get away?"

"No, not at all."

"Did he walk away quickly?"

"No, not particularly."

"How long was he talking to you?"

"About a minute or two."

"Did anything strike you as odd about his manner?"

"No, nothing, so far as I remember."

"At what time did he speak to you?"

"I suppose about ten minutes to twelve."

"And did you go away afterwards?"

"Yes, directly."

"You were not there at twelve o'clock?"

"No."

"You say you are married to a man called Tom Allen,—where is he?"

The witness hesitated for some time, but at last said in a low voice, "I don't know."

"He has left you, then?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Was your husband in Mr Goldstein's service?"

"Yes, my lord, for three years."

"Why did he leave?"

"Because of his marriage, my lord."

"Did he return to Mr Goldstein?"

"Yes, my lord, when he left me, but Mr Goldstein would not keep him."

"And why?"

No answer.

"Why would Mr Goldstein not keep your husband? You know you must answer."

The witness looked frightened, and muttered something inaudible; but when the question was put a third time she said "that Mr Goldstein was angry because she had twice come to the house and tried to see Tom."

"Your husband was Mr Goldstein's confidential servant, I think?" said Lord Wastwater.

"Yes, my lord."

"Were you glad to hear your husband had returned to his service?"

"No, my lord."

"And why?"

"I didn't like the things Mr Goldstein made him do."

"What sort of things?"

The question had to be repeated twice, and then the witness said, "Such things as deceiving Miss Kennett by a mock marriage."

"Did Mr Goldstein pretend to marry her?"

"Yes, my lord."

"And your husband helped to deceive her?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Did your husband ever say anything to you about Mr Goldstein having many enemies?"

"Yes, he has said so. He was glad to leave him. I wish he'd never gone back."

The next witness was De Lisle, who swore that he had dined with Mr Goldstein, had played *écarté* and lost, and that next morning the bank-notes he had lost had been returned to him. He had left Mr Goldstein well and in good spirits soon after eleven.

Lord Wastwater asked him whether he had often played before?

"Very often."

"And lost?"

"Yes, that too."

"Was Mr Goldstein in the habit of playing much?"

"He was in no sense a gambler, but he often played, and he played very well."

"Is it said that he had ruined several people?"

The counsel for the prosecution objected, and Lord Wastwater withdrew the question, observing, "It is important to me to have as much of Mr Goldstein's character known as I can."

With this witness the business for the day concluded, and the court adjourned.

The court was just as crowded again next morning, for it was known that important evidence would be given. The Duke sat in his old place, and followed the proceed-

ings with unflagging attention; but at intervals through the day his servant brought him a cordial, which he drank, and which appeared to revive him.

The first action of the counsel for the prosecution was to put in Lord Wastwater's letter to Mr Goldstein appointing a meeting for the night of June 1st, and to prove that it was in the prisoner's handwriting. Smithson then appeared to prove the discovery of the letter, which he did with due pompousness of manner. Then Roke was called. He gave evidence as to his various interviews with Lord Wastwater in detail, and especially as to the finding of the paper by which Ryder was traced. He also stated that Lord Wastwater had for some time been interested in detective work.

In cross-examination Lord Wastwater asked, "How many times did you speak to me about this murder?"

"Four times in all."

"And on what occasions?"

"First at the inquest, then at your house the same day, then at my house on June 7th, and again at Wastwater House on the night of June 17th."

"Did you ever on any of these occasions ask me whether I had been at Mr Goldstein's on the night of the murder?"

"No, I did not."

"Did you ever on any occasion ask me whether I had seen the knife before?"

"No, I did not."

"Did you tell me that you suspected Mr Murchison, my secretary?"

"I told you there were suspicious circumstances against him as well as others."

"Who were these others?"

"Mr De Lisle and Mr Kennett."

"Was not one of these suspicious circumstances the fact that they were all present in the house on the night of the murder?"

"Yes, it was."

"And there were other reasons besides for suspecting Murchison as well as the other two?"

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"Was his name the first you mentioned?"

"Yes."

"Did I say I thought either of these men were guilty?"

"No, you did not."

"On whom did your suspicion rest most strongly at that interview?"

"On Mr Kennett."

"Did I agree with you? or did I try to show you it could not have been he?"

"You tried to prove to me that it could not have been Mr Kennett."

"What did I say?"

"That Mr Kennett would never have smoked the cigar in Mr Goldstein's room."

"Did it occur to you that Mr Murchison might have smoked the cigar?"

"No," said Roke.

"You did not think, then, that the fact which I brought forward as a proof of Kennett's innocence might throw suspicion on Mr Murchison?"

"No, I did not," said Roke.

"It seems strange," observed Lord Wastwater. "Now, as to our third interview when the paper was found in the knife. Was there anything suspicious in my manner?"

"No."

"Did I try to throw any difficulties in your way?"

"No, none."

"Did I give you what help I could?"

"Yes, I should say you did."

"You say you first suspected me at Wastwater House after Mr Ryder recognised me?"

"That is so."

"After I had made that remark to Ryder about giving him the knife in January, was there anything uneasy in my manner?"

"No, nothing."

"Or in the conversation I had with you afterwards?"

"No, not at all."

"What had I said you were to do about Ryder if you found him?"

"You asked me to bring him to Wastwater House."

"Did you send for me that night when you came?"

"Yes, I did."

"Was there any appearance of unwillingness on my part to come and confront him?"

"None that I saw."

"Do you think Mr Goldstein was a man who made enemies?"

"I know nothing whatever about that."

Roke was re-examined by the Attorney-

General, who asked, "In the course of your various conversations the events of the night of the murder were often mentioned, I suppose?"

"Yes, often."

"And did the prisoner ever lead you to think that he had been there?"

"No, never."

"Or that he had ever seen the knife?"

"No, never."

"You assumed that he had no more knowledge than you yourself had, in short, and he did nothing to correct that assumption?"

"I should say nothing."

"Did he say anything about the knife?"

"He said he thought he had seen work like that on the handle, and that it was Indian."

"Did you convey to Lord Wastwater that your suspicions against Mr Murchison were serious?"

"No."

"Did you in fact entertain serious suspicions against Mr Murchison?"

"No; I merely mentioned him with the others."

The last witness called was Fellows, the policeman, who swore that he had been in Lord Wastwater's service at Hatton Towers, and had, in November 18—, overheard Lord Wastwater telling Mr Goldstein that he could not part with the knife, as it was a favourite of his.

This concluded the evidence for the prosecution, and the court adjourned for luncheon.

But very few people, however, left the court; for places could not be retained, and no one would lightly miss his chance of a seat. During the interval much discussion went on as to the probable result of the trial. Mrs Golightly and Mrs Gilmersdale, who were eating sandwiches with Count Hohenstein, were certain of Lord Wastwater's guilt. Mrs Golightly was even very triumphant, because she said her instinct had been proved correct. Others were as sure of his innocence, and the arguments went on until the prisoner was once more brought in, and the judge returned to court. Then there was a hush, and Lord Wastwater turned and looked around him once more. There, surrounding him, were all the men and women

among whom he had lived, with whom he had talked and made friends, who had admired, liked, feared, or distrusted him. There they were, watching his every look, his every gesture—and, except in one or two cases, curiosity was the strong and prevailing feeling. Once more the faint smile crossed his face as he turned to the judge. Then his defence began.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DEFENCE.

"My Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury, I wish to conduct my own defence before you, because I know that there is no question of law involved, and I mean to call no witnesses."

At this statement there was a slight sensation amongst the onlookers.

"That I am not guilty I have already told you, and I think that the version of the story which I am going to lay before you will come to you with as much force

and truth from myself as it would have done from the learned counsel who might have spoken for me. It is a plain story, and I shall tell it to you plainly, and my explanation will, I know, convince you, gentlemen of the jury, that I am wholly innocent of the terrible crime which is laid to my charge. I must begin by saying that I do not complain of my position here to-day. The evidence against me is strong enough to warrant grave suspicion, and I must admit that my own conduct has very naturally increased and deepened that suspicion. Nevertheless, I am an innocent man, and my confidence in the justice of Englishmen is so great that I do not feel a moment's uneasiness as to the result of this trial, or as to the

opinion which my fellow-countrymen may hold of me after it is ended. I own that I have listened with some surprise to the way in which the learned counsel have laboured to prove that I was with Mr Goldstein in his house in Preston Square between 11.30 and 12 on the evening of the 1st of June. I have never denied it; I admit most freely that I was there,—that I saw him and spoke to him on that night and at that hour."

Another sensation in court, and a low murmur, which was instantly silenced. The Attorney-General and his junior exchanged glances.

"But surely when learned counsel have proved this, and as I have said it is true, they have proved nothing. I was there,

but so were others before me. Mr De Lisle, Mr Murchison, Mr Kennett, were all present that evening. I was there later than they, that is all. It happened that after their visits the servant came in and found Mr Goldstein alive and well; had he come in after my visit half an hour later, he would have found him equally alive and well. I left Mr Goldstein a little before twelve in full health and vigour, but I left the window and the garden-gate open behind me. Through that gate and through that window came, after I had gone, yet another man, the man who is still to be found, the murderer. When I heard the evidence given at the inquest, and saw that the very fact that these three gentlemen

had visited Mr Goldstein that night roused suspicion against them, I congratulated myself on the thought that my presence there also, at a later hour, was not known. I hope and believe that had I been able to throw any light on the murder, I should have spoken: as it was, I could have given the police no help. I came after the three men who were suspected, but after me came the murderer, and his identity was, and still is, wrapped in mystery. Therefore I was silent at the inquest, although perhaps it had been braver to speak; and had I spoken, I realise it fully, I should not have been here now. That is my punishment for my cowardice. But now I will take the evidence which you have heard to-day.

"The doctor said that he saw Mr Goldstein's body at about half-past eight on Wednesday morning—that he must have been dead several hours. I believe the murder to have been committed a little after twelve o'clock: the doctor refused to swear that he believed Mr Goldstein to have been killed before twelve, and no doubt rightly. The doctor's evidence merely shows that the murder was committed some time during the night, and this in no way throws the guilt upon me. There is no proof that the murder was committed during the half-hour in which I was with Mr Goldstein.

"The next evidence is that of Mr Barker, the cigar-merchant, into which I need not enter, for I freely admit that it was

I who smoked the cigar while I was talking to Mr Goldstein. That I left it unfinished on the table, however, is no proof that it was I who committed the murder.

"Then comes Mr Ryder, the silversmith, who is also perfectly accurate. I did give him the knife to clean last January, and he recognised me quite rightly on the night of the ball at Wastwater House. I shall tell you, gentlemen of the jury, very soon, what were my reasons for not declaring my knowledge of the knife. I will first go through the other evidence.

"Mrs Allen was the next witness for the prosecution. Her evidence, it seems to me, tells in my favour. What is the story which counsel for the prosecution

asks you to believe? That a man goes to visit one who is a friend of his; that he murders him in a particularly cold-blooded and treacherous manner; that he leaves the house, and at once does what I may be allowed to call, although it was I who did it, a very kindly act of charity. The hour was not late, the servants might very well have been still up,—what so possible as that one should come into the study, and finding what had occurred, give the alarm? Would any man who had just committed a murder delay just outside the house, when discovery might take place at any moment? Would any man capable of so grave and ghastly a crime commit a good action the moment after? Would

any man be quite free from agitation, as Mrs Allen has sworn that I was, the moment after he has killed one who was to some extent certainly his friend? I ask you whether you think this probable—whether you think it even possible? It seems to me that Mrs Allen's evidence, so far from showing my guilt, ought to prove my innocence of the crime imputed to me.

"Concerning Mr De Lisle's evidence I need say nothing; it does not touch me in any way. I saw the bank-notes on the table, and was told by Mr Goldstein that he had won them that evening.

"And I now come to Detective Roke's evidence, which the prosecution seem to rely on as proving a guilty concealment on my part. What does it come to? That

he found a letter from me to Mr Goldstein appointing 11.30 P.M. on the 1st of June for my interview with him. Likely enough, as I went there at that time. The letter is genuine—the appointment was made by me, and made quite openly. Then he says that I did not mention to him, when we talked over the case, that I had seen Mr Goldstein that night, or that I had at one time owned the knife. Why should I? He never asked me. Why does Mr Roke suspect me? For three reasons. 1st, He believes that I was present on the night of the murder. That is true, but it does not prove that I committed it, unless it proves that De Lisle, Murchison, and Kennett committed it too. 2d, He finds that I smoked the cigar which was found in Mr

Goldstein's room. That is also true, but it proves nothing. And who suggested to him that the murderer smoked the cigar? It was I who suggested it, as he has sworn. Should I have done that if I had been guilty? 3d, He finds that the knife with which the murder was committed belongs to me. Ryder has proved it. But who helped him to find Ryder. Again it was I. Should I have done so had I been guilty? Does it come within your experience that a guilty man puts into a detective's hands the weapons against himself? If I wished for conviction, could I not have confessed? Should I have adopted this clumsy and possibly ineffectual mode of proceeding?—for even with a clue the police are not always omniscient.

No, it is unlikely, it is contrary to experience, it is preposterous.

"My conduct admits of two explanations: either I am guilty—and I have shown you that the evidence does not warrant that supposition — or I am innocent, and my actions can be explained in a reasonable manner. That explanation I will now give. I have known Mr Goldstein since I have been in England, now over two years. He and I were never intimate, but we had various business matters in common, and I knew him well for an acquaintance. In the last week in May I consulted him about some money matters, on which, as is well known, he was one of the first authorities. I wanted to have a long talk with him, and after failing once or twice I

finally suggested the somewhat strange hour of 11.30 on the 1st of June. I was on my way home from the opera, and he told me he should be dining at home with a friend. Mr De Lisle has told you that it was no uncommon thing for him to receive people late. I went, we talked, I left him, I saw Mrs Allen, and I went home. Next day I heard of his murder. I went to the inquest and there met Mr Roke, whom I have seen several times before. Of late years I have been much interested in detective work, and both in London and Paris have taken some part in the search for criminals. The work has a great fascination for some men—it has it for me. When Mr Roke came, the first thing he said to me was that he suspected my

secretary, Frank Murchison, as he has sworn. I alleged his innocence: he thereupon suggested that Mr De Lisle or Kennett might be the criminal. I was very strongly of opinion that neither of the three were guilty: I knew Murchison must be innocent, I believed the others were so likewise. What was I to do? I saw, or thought I saw, that if I acknowledged that the knife had belonged to me, it might cast more suspicion on Murchison. For he was living in my house at the time when the knife was in my possession. It is true I had lost it, as I shall tell you presently, but I know enough of detective work to be sure that this would not be considered a satisfactory explanation. I determined, therefore, to keep silence about

the knife. Roke has sworn that his suspicions were not grave against me, but one never knows how soon suspicions may be strengthened. I know this to my cost. I have told you that detective work has great charms for me, and not only do I like to discover things myself, but it gives me pleasure to see other people discover them also. I could do no good by saying I had been with Mr Goldstein that night—no light would have been thrown on the mystery. On the other hand, it might be slightly disagreeable for me. And, besides, Roke would probably have told me no more, and I should have lost the excitement of the chase; and, lastly, I was interested in seeing whether he would find out that I had been there. All these reasons together induced

me to keep silence. It may have been wrong, as it has turned out it certainly was foolish, but I am punished for it. Had he asked me directly, the case might have been different. It is one thing to suppress a fact, it is another to tell a direct lie. But, as he has sworn, he did not ask me, and I said nothing. Later on, when I was examining the knife in his room, the detective's instinct ran away with me. I could not restrain myself, and I tried to help him in every way I could to find Ryder, before I recollected myself sufficiently to consider that in the end Ryder would no doubt identify me. But afterwards, when I did think of it, the thing seemed to me immaterial; for I knew my innocence, and I believed that Roke would know it also.

Then on the evening of the ball, when Ryder identified me, as Roke has sworn, I made a slip, and by asking Ryder whether I was the man who took the knife to him in January I roused Roke's suspicions. It is true that I made this slip, that I had not intended to admit it; but I ask you whether this very thing does not show that I am innocent. If I am the man he represents me to be,—crafty, cunning, treacherous,—should I have made so obvious a mistake? I had asked Roke to bring the silversmith to me—I was not taken by surprise. I knew that Roke had arrived with another man, for I had been sent for. Is it probable that I should have made so grave a mistake had I felt that my life was in danger? The very fact of the blunder shows

that I believed no great issue attached to it: the man must have been a fool who would have failed and betrayed himself at that moment. No, gentlemen of the jury, I submit that my conduct throughout was that of an innocent man, and that the evidence bears out the assertion.

"As to the fortunes of the knife, and how the murderer got hold of it, I can only conjecture. Some two months ago I was travelling from my house in the Lakes to Hatton Towers. I was travelling alone, and at Crewe Station I lost a small black bag. There was little in it of value,—a few books and some writing materials,—but there was also this knife. I thought of advertising for it, but the days went by,

occupations crowded upon me, and I forgot it. I wish now, of course, that I had not forgotten, for it would have supplied me with fresh evidence for my innocence. But after all it is immaterial, for in everything else I have shown you that my conduct is absolutely natural. I have proved it from the evidence of witnesses brought against me. Only in this matter I can bring no proof. Had I had my servant I could have produced a witness; as it is, I have only my own word. The knife was lost in the bag; what happened to it then I do not know. It may have been stolen by the murderer, it may have been sold by the thief and bought again by the murderer. That I cannot say, any more than I can say who the murderer was. But—and what I have to

say now is very painful to me, as it will be, I know, painful to you to hear—we might look in several quarters for Mr Goldstein's murderer. I was obliged by my position, by the danger I am in, to ask one or two questions, which otherwise I should not have asked, as to Mr Goldstein's relations with other men. To some of these I received answers; one was objected to. I need not point out to you that if the learned counsel had expected an answer favourable to Mr Goldstein, that objection would not have been made. Mr Goldstein is dead, and I wish to say nothing that will throw scorn on his name; but it cannot be denied that many people had reason to be his enemies, and some might think they were justified in seeking revenge. And this

brings me to my last point—the last I shall urge upon you, but to me one of the most important.

"It is the belief of all those versed in the criminal law that every murderer must have a motive. Then, where is mine? I ask you, gentlemen, where is mine? Has there been, not the smallest proof, but the smallest effort at proof, that I had a reason for committing this murder which is laid to my charge? Has the learned counsel for the prosecution advanced any theory on the subject? have the witnesses hazarded so much as a supposition? There has not been a word from any one which could be tortured into the semblance of a hint at a motive. Does not this tell its own tale? Does it not show the improbability of the

whole story?—does it not establish my innocence? I stand here and ask you what possible motive I could have had for committing this murder? My story is perfectly straightforward. You have heard it from myself and from the witnesses. I made an appointment with Mr Goldstein by letter; I kept my appointment. I smoked and talked with him for some twenty minutes; I left him quietly, with no signs of agitation or hurry; I talked with a woman outside his gate and gave her money; I went home. Then, partly from a fear for my friend, partly from a wish to amuse myself, I did not disclose two facts to the detective—facts which he never asked me to tell him. That is all. Is this the conduct of a guilty man? I had no

reason for murdering Mr Goldstein—he had not injured me in any way, we were on perfectly friendly terms, I had absolutely nothing to gain from his death. I am rich even beyond my desires, I am an English gentleman, I can look forward to many years of life. Why should I wish to imperil all this—to put myself within reach of the arm of the law? Surely there should be proof of a very strong motive to explain this otherwise unaccountable fact. And there is no such proof, nor a shadow of any such proof.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I appeal to you, to your sense, your clear judgment, your knowledge of mankind, and I am confident that the result of my appeal will be that I shall leave this court unconvicted and unblamed."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DURING THE ADJOURNMENT.

After the trial was over for the day, the Solicitor for the Treasury and the Attorney-General remained for a short time in court. They agreed that Lord Wastwater had made out a fair case for himself.

"The story is a plausible one," said the Attorney-General, "but I don't believe a word of it. I believe he is guilty. Motive, it is true, there seems to be none, but there is Lord Wastwater's character. What is true of other men is not true of him."

"Maddox will probably take that line in summing up," observed the Solicitor.

"Yes; but will the jury understand him?"

"That is the question."

"What is your opinion as to the result?" asked the Attorney-General.

"I think the jury will disagree—a certain number will be determined to acquit, and they will win. In Scotland there would be a verdict of 'Not proven.'"

"H'm," said the other. "Well, I don't agree. I think they will convict him."

At this moment the door of the court opened, and a man came in with a letter in his hand.

"The Attorney-General?" he asked.

"I am the Attorney-General," answered that gentleman.

"I have orders to give you this letter at once, sir," and he handed him a letter marked "Private, and very urgent."

The Attorney-General looked at it, opened it, and uttered an exclamation of surprise. Then he looked up. "Is there anything else?" he asked.

"I was told to take back a note to say you had received it, sir," answered the man.

"Ah, yes," replied the Attorney-General; and going to a table he wrote a few lines and handed the letter to the messenger, who at once departed.

"Well?" said the Solicitor, expectantly.

"A curious incident, which took even me

by surprise. Read that," answered the other.

The Solicitor took the paper. It was a letter, and it ran thus :—

"*July* 11, 1890.

"DEAR SIR,—After Lord Wastwater's defence to-day, I can no longer in honesty withhold a piece of evidence which is in my possession. The enclosed letter was written by the prisoner to my sister, Miss Patience De Lisle, two days before his arrest. Make what use of it you think fit. I am, of course, prepared to swear to this in court.—Yours faithfully,

"ROBERT DE LISLE."

"And the letter?" asked the Solicitor.

"Is here. I have not read it yet—it

is long. But it seems to prove all we want."

They read the letter in silence—then the Attorney-General said, "I suppose the judge will allow us to bring this forward?"

"I think there can be no doubt of it; but we must have Miss De Lisle's evidence."

"Of course," said the Attorney-General. "You will see her to-night, I suppose?"

"Yes, or I shall send Yeatman. Is she in town?"

"I don't know. She lives with her aunt, Mrs Dearing, at 102 Berkeley Square."

"Yes," said the Solicitor, half-absently.

The other looked at him. "There

is a report about, you know, that she was engaged to Lord Wastwater."

"Yes, I know," returned the other. "It is untrue, I believe, but it will be a difficult position for her."

"And for the man who sees her," said the Attorney-General.

"Yes," said the Solicitor, getting up.

"You'll send Yeatman to-night, then?"

"No, I shall go myself," said the Solicitor.

A few hours later Mrs Dearing and Patience were sitting in Mrs Dearing's room after dinner. They preferred the small cosy little room to the big drawing-room, and Patience loved the conservatory. Mrs Dearing was writing some letters, and Patience was turning over the leaves

of a book. They had heard the account of the trial that day; for Mark and Frank came as soon as it was over to tell them all the details, and Patience forced herself to listen with calmness and outward composure. It was about half-past nine when the servant entered, and, handing a card to Mrs Dearing, said that a gentleman wished to see her.

"Mr Woodburn," she said; "who is he, and what does he want, I wonder?" She looked across to Patience. "Will you mind his coming up, dear?" she asked.

"Not the least," said Patience. "What is his name?"

"Woodburn," said her aunt.

Patience changed colour. "Woodburn,"

she said. "That is the name of the Solicitor to the Treasury."

"Dear me," said Mrs Dearing; "but then I'd better see him alone. How stupid of me not to remember! I think I——"

But at this moment the door opened, and Mr Woodburn entered the room.

He bowed to both, and then turning to Mrs Dearing,—"I am speaking to Mrs Dearing?" he said.

She bowed.

"And that lady is Miss De Lisle?"

Mrs Dearing bowed again. She knew Mr Woodburn by sight, but she had never spoken to him.

"If you wish to see me, perhaps we had better be alone," she said, anxious to spare Patience.

"My business is really more with Miss De Lisle than with you, Mrs Dearing," he answered; "but if you like, I will tell you about it first. I am the Solicitor for the Treasury. I have come about the trial of Lord Wastwater."

He spoke to Mrs Dearing, but his eyes were fixed on Patience, who, on hearing his last words, rose and came towards him. She looked ill, and the long, plain, black gown she wore gave her a peculiar look of mourning.

"You say you wish to speak to me?" she asked.

Mr Woodburn looked at her for a moment, and then said, "I have come to ask you about a letter which you received some weeks ago from Lord Wastwater."

She answered quietly, "What letter?"

"I had better tell you the whole truth. Your brother"—she started, and he bent his look still more keenly on her—"your brother has sent me a letter, from Lord Wastwater to you, dated the 22d of June. You know now what it is, I think."

She clenched her hands and turned away silently. After a moment he went on: "This is a matter of grave importance. I believe that Lord Wastwater may be acquitted. I know, as you know, that he is guilty. It is right that justice should be done."

She turned to him again. "In what way?" she asked. "What do you mean?"

"To-morrow we shall produce that letter

in court. Your brother will swear that it was written to you, and that it is genuine. I have seen him,—he tells me he should not have made use of it had the case gone for the prosecution. We cannot tell what the verdict will be, but your brother thought, as do many, that the prisoner will be acquitted. He was not justified in concealing this evidence, and of course we are bound to produce it."

"Well, and what have I to do with all this? You will produce the letter, and my brother will swear that it was written to me. What more is necessary to get the conviction you wish for?" she said, with intense scorn.

"I am afraid," said Woodburn, speaking very slowly—"I am afraid that you must

give evidence,—that you must swear to having received this letter."

"I give evidence?—I?" And she turned on him, her head thrown back, her eyes flashing.

"Yes, you," said Woodburn, in a low voice. "He has committed the crime,—justice must be done."

"But not by me," she said. "I will not do it. I have known Lord Wastwater for long, and I loved him. I know he has done this thing, and the knowledge has darkened my whole life. And I know, too, that it is right he should be punished, but it shall not come through me."

There was a pause, and for a moment the lawyer felt as if he could not go on

with his task; but there was no help for it—his duty was plain.

"Understand me," he said. "I would not do this thing if I could help it; but it is not for me to choose. This evidence has come to me,—I am bound to lay it before the court, I am bound to call you as a witness. The law takes no denial, and it knows no mercy. You must appear as a witness, but you shall be asked as few questions as possible; you will merely have to assent once or twice, that is all. I will do my best for you."

But there was no yielding. "And if I do not appear?" she asked.

"There is such a thing as imprisonment for contempt of court," he answered.

"Oh, my dear child!" interposed Mrs

Dearing, anxiously. She had been listening to the conversation with growing horror.

Patience seemed not to hear—she looked at Woodburn steadily, facing him without flinching, white and determined.

"Whatever the consequences," she said, "I will not do this thing. If you press me to appear, I shall say that I know nothing of the letter."

He was moved with intense admiration for her, and with intense pity; but neither was apparent as he quietly said, "It will be of no use, and it will be perjury."

"Nevertheless, so it shall be," she replied. "I will say nothing which will convict him—nothing."

"I tell you it will be useless," he insisted, "no one will believe you: the examination will show that you are not telling the truth, and you will be perjuring yourself."

"Well, and if so, I will take the consequences," she said.

But the shrewd old lawyer detected in her tone a ring of less certainty, and as he looked at her with experienced eyes, he made up his mind that when it came to the point she would give way. So he forbore to press her further.

"You will do as you like," he said, "but you must appear in the witness-box. Believe me, I am sorry. I——"

She cut him short. "Don't apologise: have you told me all I ought to know?"

"Yes, I have," he said, "and I am going. But let me advise you," and the kindness and gentleness of his tone compelled her to listen. "You will be asked as little as possible—just say Yes or No: we will make it as easy for you as we can. And I am very sorry."

She stood with her head down and her eyes fixed on the ground. Then she looked up at him. "It is not your fault," she said bravely, and then hurriedly she left the room.

Mr Woodburn stood looking after her for a moment, and then took his leave after answering a few very incoherent questions from Mrs Dearing. As he went down-stairs he heaved a sigh of relief. "I never was more glad to get

a thing over," he said to himself. "That's a striking girl, and she won't perjure herself when it comes to the point. I think she may refuse to speak, but that will do almost as well for us. And her brother is a scoundrel!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SILENT WITNESS.

The next morning, the last day of the trial, Lord Wastwater appeared in court looking just as usual, quite calm and impenetrable. Every one was awaiting the beginning of the summing up, when, to the general surprise, the counsel for the prosecution rose, and announcing that a new and most important piece of evidence had come into their possession unexpectedly the night before, asked permission to reopen the case for the

prosecution. The judge looked surprised, and asked what was the nature of the evidence. It consisted, said the Attorney-General, of a letter purporting to have been written by the prisoner, which had been in the possession of one of the witnesses, who had held it back for reasons which would be apparent on reading the letter. The witness, however, had considered it his duty to send in the letter after hearing the speech for the defence. The judge hereupon asked for the letter, which was handed up to him, and he read it carefully.

"You wish to call witnesses to prove the genuineness of this letter, I suppose?" he asked.

"That is what we propose, my Lord," answered the Attorney-General.

Lord Wastwater, who had listened quietly to the speech of the prosecuting counsel, now interposed. He objected strenuously to the production of the letter, and appealed to the judge to refuse so exceptional an indulgence. The whole power and wealth of the Treasury had been at the service of the prosecution, he said—they had had every advantage, and it was most unusual, indeed unprecedented, to come at the last moment and ask to reopen a case which had been already closed. After a few moments' consideration, however, the judge gave his decision in favour of the prosecution, and allowed the letter to be

produced; and very soon De Lisle once more entered the witness-box.

He explained that on the day when the prisoner was committed for trial he had been at 102 Berkeley Square, and had then seen a letter addressed to his sister in the prisoner's handwriting. This letter was given by Mr Payne, Lord Wastwater's solicitor, to Mrs Dearing, and was by her sent up to Patience. The day before the trial began he had called at Berkeley Square, and on being told his sister was up-stairs in her sitting-room he had gone up there. He found no one there, however, and sat down at the writing-table to write a note. There was no writing-paper, and after opening one or two drawers in the

search for some, he came upon one in which he recognised the envelope he had seen in Mr Payne's hands. Convinced that there was some secret which he, as his sister's guardian, had a right to know, he took it up, and found inside it the letter he had sent to the prosecution. He felt he had no right to withhold the evidence, although he had felt strongly tempted to do so, and had resolved at first to keep the letter back, as he did not wish to make his sister's name public.

After De Lisle had finished his statement he was preparing to leave the witness-box, when Lord Wastwater stopped him. Bobby looked pale and anxious, and he had told his story in so low a voice that

once or twice his answers were almost inaudible. Now, as he found Lord Wastwater's eyes fixed on him, he shifted about uneasily in the witness-box, and looked about the court as if in the hope that some relief might come.

"I must ask a few questions after this very unexpected evidence," said Lord Wastwater. "I am very sorry Miss De Lisle's name has been dragged in, but it has not been done by me."

"Did Miss De Lisle ever speak to you of this letter?"

"No," said Bobby.

"She never mentioned it to you in any way?"

"No."

"Did Mr Payne say anything to you about it?"

"No."

"So that your only knowledge of it came from your having seen it by chance in Mrs Dearing's hands?"

"Yes."

"When you found yourself alone in your sister's room, did you at once begin to look for this letter?"

"No," said Bobby, eagerly; "I was looking for writing-paper."

"What drawer was this letter in—the front drawer?"

"No, a side drawer," said De Lisle, with some hesitation.

"Was it locked?"

There was no answer.

"Was it locked?"

"Yes, but the key was in the top front drawer."

"Are you in the habit of reading letters which you find in locked drawers?"

No answer.

"Did you tell Miss De Lisle you had taken the letter?"

"No."

"You read it before you took it away?"

"Yes."

"And then you took it?"

"Yes."

"Do you generally take other people's letters in order to put them to any use you may think fit?"

Bobby tried to pull himself together.

"I am my sister's guardian, and

I thought I was acting in her interests."

"By stealing her letters?"

"I don't call it stealing."

"Do you not think it would have been better to have told your sister what you had done?"

"No."

"Did you write the note to your sister that day in her room?"

"No."

"You went away as soon as you had got the letter, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"For fear she should know you had been in the room, or why?"

"I — I was so much taken up with the letter, I forgot what I had come for."

"And you are quite confident that it was right to take that letter without your sister's knowledge?"

The ever-increasing scorn in Lord Wastwater's questions and manner had been felt by every soul present, and a gradually growing anger at the witness's answers was beginning to be apparent. But when to this last attack he began to reply in hesitating tones, "As her guardian I thought I might," the feeling of the audience could no longer be controlled, and a burst of contemptuous laughter rang through the court. The judge imposed silence severely, and as soon as Lord Wastwater said he wished to ask no more questions, Bobby hurriedly left the witness-box.

Lord Wastwater stood waiting with his eyes fixed on the ground, expecting the name which he knew must come next. But when Patience was called, a slight tightening of his hands on the rail in front of him was the only sign of emotion he showed.

The oath was duly administered, and then Patience waited while a chair was fetched. She did not sit down, however; and now, amid a silence absolute and profound, the Attorney-General asked her the first questions as to her name, to which she answered quietly, and then he handed her the letter and said, "Do you know this letter?"

There was no answer.

The counsel repeated his question.

"I am sorry," said Patience, simply, "but I can answer no questions."

The judge looked up, and the Attorney-General said quickly, "Just say Yes or No —that is all. Just say whether you know the letter."

But Patience said nothing: only she looked across the court to the high dock, and her gaze met that of Lord Wastwater fixed on her. He had raised his head at the first sound of her voice, and had continued to look at her. She was deathly white, and under the calm dignity of her expression all could see the profound pathos in her look. There was still the striking carriage, the noble poise of the head, but there was a stricken look about her, as though her life had been crushed

by grief. All this he saw, and then he met her eyes, and they looked at each other. The pause lasted only a second, yet to all the observers it seemed as if an appreciable space of time had passed. Then Lord Wastwater spoke. "Do not press Miss De Lisle,—I will speak. That letter is mine—I wrote it. I am guilty of the murder."

His words rang distinctly through the court, they were heard by every soul in those crowded benches and galleries, and there was a low murmur and then a dead silence. Even the counsel for the prosecution, accustomed to surprises and unexpected events, were startled. The Attorney-General looked keenly at Lord Wastwater, then he leant across to speak

to Mr Woodburn, and the sound of muttered conversation began to arise in court. But again there was silence when the quiet passionless voice of the judge was heard addressing Lord Wastwater.

"Do I understand you to say that you committed the murder with which you are charged?"

"I did commit it," was the answer.

"Are you aware of the gravity of your statement?" asked the judge again.

"Yes."

"Let me ask you again. Do you really understand what you are saying? Do you affirm that you deliberately murdered Goldstein?"

"Yes."

The answer sounded through the court, —there was no hesitation, no uncertainty; but the judge paused, and after considering a moment, he said, "I shall adjourn the court for a quarter of an hour, in order that the prisoner may have time to consider whether he will abide by his confession."

Lord Wastwater stood facing the judge while he said the words acknowledging his guilt; then he turned and looked at Patience. She had sunk back on the chair on first hearing his words, hiding her face in her hands. But now, as she heard the repeated questions of the judge and Lord Wastwater's replies, she rose again to her feet, and her eyes were fixed on the prisoner. As soon as the

judge ordered the adjournment some one pressed forward to help her to leave the witness-box, and as she descended the steps she was trembling all over, so that it seemed as if she could hardly stand. Once she turned and looked back, and once more her eyes met those of Lord Wastwater. Then she went, and he was left alone. But in a moment he too had descended from the dock, and there was only left in court the curious excited crowd of onlookers.

When the given time had expired the judge re-entered the court, and once more he put the question to the prisoner, "Do you still, after consideration, affirm that you committed the murder of which you stand charged?"

There was a pause of a second.

"I did commit it," was the answer.

The judge was silent, and the Attorney-General said, "Our case now is of course closed, my Lord. The prisoner's acknowledgment of his guilt renders it unnecessary to make any comment on the evidence. We leave the case in your Lordship's hands."

The judge then, in a manner which was even for him unusually grave, explained to the jury that it was not necessary to sum up,—the prisoner's confession of the crime practically amounted to a plea of guilty. They had no course open to them but to return a verdict accordingly.

But even after the plain unmistakable words of the judge, the jury seemed to

hesitate for a moment. It was as if they were taken aback by the strange and sudden development of the case, and could hardly bring themselves to believe the prisoner's confession. There was a hurried consultation, but it was soon ended,—the foreman of the jury stood up, and the clerk asked, "Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon your verdict?"

"We have," replied the foreman.

"Is the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty."

The word fell amidst profound silence, sounding as it did the death-knell to any hope which might have existed even after the prisoner's confession, for it was the end, unchangeable and irrevocable. Perhaps every one had really expected a

different conclusion, and not the damning evidence of the morning, not even the prisoner's confession itself, had brought with it a complete sense of certainty. Now there was no appeal, no possibility of doubt, no hope. There was not a sound from all that large assembly: the silence was only broken by the solemn question of the clerk of arraigns—"Prisoner at the bar, what have you to say why judgment should not be given you to die?"

Then Lord Wastwater spoke.

CHAPTER XXV.

A CONFESSION.

"My Lord, the letter which was this morning produced in court contains, as your Lordship knows, a confession of the crime of which I am accused, and an explanation of the motives which led me to commit it. For certain reasons, I preferred to plead guilty and make my own statement rather than have the letter proved and read in court. That I did kill Mr Goldstein I have already said; what were my motives for doing so I will tell you

in a few words, if I may be allowed to trespass on the patience of the court. I can well imagine how baffled the prosecution have been by the absence of all apparent motive on my part for the murder, nor have I to tell any hidden story of revenge. The motive lies in myself, in my own history. And I must ask you to let me speak for a few moments of myself. To some men the wealth, the power, and the position which have been mine now for more than twenty years would have brought happiness and content; to me they have brought only an ever-increasing burden of weariness and indifference. Had I been forced to make my own way, I might have been happy; as it is, I have had no object in life,

nothing to work for; every desire has been gratified as soon as felt. When I was still a young man I wearied of England, and I went abroad. In many countries I have sought for interest and excitement, and I have found it for a time, and for a time only. I have tried everything—study, adventure, love, hardship; they all pleased me at first, but each in its turn palled, and I was left to wonder that people could be found to fill their lives with such things. In nothing, as it seemed to me, could any abiding interest be felt."

He paused for a moment and hesitated, then he went on. "I am wrong. In one life I could understand that there might be an absorbing, ever-deepening interest—in the life of religion. I could see its

attraction, could understand that to one who believed it might bring unfailing hope and fulness of life. But I had left faith behind me at Oxford. I knew that this belief was a delusion, that this world is all, and that to look beyond is only a vain dream. And I found nothing in all I tried. At last I determined to come home to England, to try once more the life of an English gentleman; and when that failed, as fail I knew it would in time, to kill myself. For I hold that every man has a right to put an end to his own life when he pleases,—to finish the play when the plot loses its interest. And so for the last two years this intention has been definite, the manner in which it should be carried out the only

thing uncertain. In the common modes of suicide it has always seemed to me there is something absurd. A man shuffles out of life and does no more good by ending it than he has by living it. I am quite conscious that my life has been of no use even to myself, but in planning my death I believe I had a genuine wish to make it a benefit to some one. And at last the thought came to me, that by murdering a man whose life was useless and harmful I might end my life to some purpose. Was this the only reason? No, there was another, trivial and inadequate it will seem to most, but I cannot say which of the two was the stronger in my own mind,—which was my real motive. Among the few interests of my life was

the amusement of studying the detection of crime. It was a purely intellectual interest, and it pleased me. It occurred to me, therefore, to give to the end of my life a zest which it otherwise could not have had, by watching in the character of an amateur detective the discovery of my own crime. These are my motives for the act itself.

"As to the person, I thought of Goldstein because I knew him to be a man immoral and selfish, whose life was of use to none, whose death would make no mourners. And I believed too, then, that his death would benefit the only two persons for whom I have had more than a passing feeling of love. In this I was mistaken —it has benefited but one: the other it

has injured, although, as I hope, only for a time. Thus I decided the matter, and I murdered Goldstein. I had planned the whole beforehand. I made an appointment with him for that night; I went to him at the hour named; I smoked and talked with him for a little time, and then, while he was looking at some papers, I stood by him and stabbed him in the back of the neck. He died instantly, without a struggle and without pain. I then destroyed the first letter I wrote about the appointment for that evening; the other, the one which has been produced in court, I could not find, and I left the house. As I did so, I noticed the woman sitting on the door-step opposite. It is unpleasant to see misery—at all events, I crossed the

street and gave her money; then I went home. Next day I was told of the murder; I attended the inquest, and I saw Roke. He came to me and told me all his suspicions, and I in return gave him some slight help. I had left a clue, the knife; yet the circumstances of the murder were so strange — partly by my doing, partly by chance—that it is doubtful whether suspicion would have rested on me had it not been for my mistake in speaking to Ryder on the night of my ball. It was a slip, and it lost me. Other men before me have made similar mistakes. It occurred at a moment when I was most anxious to be careful, at the moment when I began to doubt the wisdom of what I had done. I saw that Roke's suspicions

were aroused at once, and for an instant I thought of flight, and prepared for it. But after all I determined to await arrest. It came, and now I await the death which at one time I hoped for. But reasons which I had not expected for avoiding public disgrace determined me to make every effort for my defence, and to secure an acquittal if I could. That, and not the mere amusement of playing out the play, was my motive in pleading 'Not guilty.' Perhaps I might have shaken even the evidence which was brought against me this morning, but only by means which I would not adopt, and I preferred to end the situation at once by confession."

Here, for the first time, his voice quivered, and it seemed as if he were possessed by

strong feeling; but he mastered it at once, and went on almost defiantly: "I do not wish to live,—in any case I should not have lived much longer, and my last weeks of life have perhaps contained more fulness of experience than all the past years. Therefore I have no regret for what I have done, no fear for the future, no sorrow for the past. Goldstein's death was a wrong to no one: were there a Providence, he could not have lived as he did without a check. He deserved to die, and he died by my hand. Man lives for himself alone; he has a right to dispose of his life as I have disposed of mine. I have had little happiness, and there are many things which I regret, but I do not regret the deed which has brought me here to-day."

Lord Wastwater ended amidst profound silence: except for that one moment, he had spoken quietly, distinctly, without emotion or gesture. He stood facing the judge, looking at him, straight and unflinching. Only his intense pallor showed that he was moved. The audience listened with ever-growing surprise. All had expected something more convincing, more adequate. The cold-blooded cynicism of his words shocked and alienated even those who still, in spite of his confession, believed in him, and thought that some explanation, some moral if not legal excuse for his deed, would be forthcoming. But the stillness was only broken by the clear and grave voice of the judge, who had assumed the black cap.

"Hugo Rother, Earl of Wastwater," he said, "you have been convicted of having committed one of the most cold-blooded and treacherous murders known in the whole history of crime. You sought out a man with whom you were on terms of acquaintance, if not of friendship—a man who, as you admit, had done you no injury, and who therefore had no reason to mistrust you; you sought him out, and at a moment when he was entirely unsuspicious, when he could not resist, you dealt him a cowardly blow, and killed him. You have put forward no shadow of excuse for this, except that you wished to amuse yourself by watching the detection of your own crime, and that you thought your victim's life was a

burden, not a benefit, to society. Merely to state the first reason is to condemn it; and you know well that the second strikes at the root of all law, of all society. No man may make himself the judge of another; the wellbeing of society depends on a mutual trust and confidence which you have done your utmost to destroy. And you, who have done this, ought to have been among the first to set a high standard, to uphold virtue and honour. By your own confession you have used the ability, riches, and position with which you have been gifted for purely selfish ends, and now you have closed what you yourself feel to have been a useless life by a cruel and cowardly deed. You have tried to persuade yourself, or to make us

think you have persuaded yourself, that your crime would be a benefit to mankind; but, as a matter of fact," and here the judge's voice took a deeper and still graver tone, "hardly had it been committed than it brought upon others ineffaceable consequences of sorrow and suffering, which you perhaps did not foresee, but which none the less rest upon your own head. I trust that in the time still left you on earth you will be brought, by the infinite grace of God, to see your deed in its true light. But for me it remains only to pass sentence on you, and that sentence is—That you be taken to the place from whence you came, and from thence to a place of execution, and that you be there hanged by the neck until you

shall be dead, and that your body shall be afterwards buried within the precincts of the prison in which you shall have been last confined. And may the Lord have mercy upon your soul!"

The judge ceased. As he spoke there had arisen before him a keen recollection of Lord Wastwater as he knew him at Oxford in years gone by,—of the brilliance of his promise, of the admiration of the friends among whom he himself had been numbered. But the habit of self-restraint enabled him to conceal his strong feeling, and it only served to give a deeper gravity and solemnity to his words. In spite of the intense excitement of all the spectators in court, not a sound broke the stillness. Lord Wastwater heard the

judge's words calmly, and only when he alluded to the consequences which his crime had brought upon others did he show a sign of emotion; but he listened quietly to the solemn words at the end, and he turned to leave the dock without a sign.

The old Duke, from his accustomed place, watched him fixedly to the last: his eyes still had the same strange hard glitter, the same evil keenness. Then when his son had disappeared from sight he was helped from his place by his servant, and soon the scene of the tragedy was filled with other spectators and other woes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

At the end of January, some six months after Lord Wastwater's trial, Mark Forrest and his wife were at dinner in their house in London. Two letters were brought in and handed to Mrs Forrest, who read them and gave them to her husband. The first was from Mrs Dearing.

"My dear Evelyn,—You have been a long time without news of us, and I know you must be wanting to hear about

Patience. She is better certainly: it has struck me that a change has come within the last two or three weeks,—her eyes have looked brighter, and she has not been so listless and depressed. I have every hope now that all will be well, and that in time she will forget what she has gone through. Poor little darling, she has had a terrible shock, but she will get over it. People really always do. I remember poor Lady Curtis, after her husband died in the Polar expedition, would not see any one at all for two years, and then she married the captain of her husband's ship. Not that Patience refuses to see people. She was quite glad to have St Buryans and Frank Murchison here at Christmas. But I am sure she will not

marry either of them. By the by, you have heard, I suppose, that that wretched man gave Mr Payne a large sum of money for Patience. He meant well, no doubt, but it is very tiresome, for no one knows what she is to do. Mr Payne says she must have it. Of course that would not matter if she did not marry; but if she does, her husband will ask such awkward questions. That horrid old Duke of Beverley is dead too at last, and there is no heir. What an extraordinary story it all was! The strangest thing to me is that Lord Wastwater did not kill himself in prison. I am sure that in the old days he would. Of course Patience might take the money and endow a hospital or something; but that sort of thing makes

such a sensation, and what we have to do is to keep her quiet and not let her be talked about. There has been quite enough of that, although I think very few people know quite the real truth.

"I hope you are coming at Easter with your husband. I want you to see Patience. The things she says make me rather uneasy sometimes, but I don't think she really means them. Still you will make her sensible.—Your affectionate

"ALMIRA DEARING."

The second letter was from Patience. She began by speaking of the Riviera, of the peace and solitude of her life, of her aunt's kindness. Then she went on :—

"I am slowly coming to a decision which I will tell you, but you must not speak of it yet. I think you will understand and sympathise. You know he left with Mr Payne a large sum of money —I think it is £100,000—in trust for me. At first I felt I must refuse it—every one told me so; but other thoughts are coming to me, and a strong purpose has taken possession of me, although as yet it is still indefinite. I cannot yet say how, but I feel that his money must do some of the good which he might have done, and it must do it through me. There is within me a deep belief that some reparation must be made, some sacrifice rendered, and that it is I who should dedicate my life to this. He never used

his opportunities for good, but may I not believe that he has enabled me in some degree to take his place,—to make up for his neglect, his guilty indifference?

"Evelyn, it is the truth, I love him still. I know that, except for one moment, his love for me was pure and generous. I could not love him as I still do had there not been something of noble purpose, something of good, in him. You know he never wrote to me after the trial—he made no sign. In that other letter he told me to forget him, to let my life be unshadowed by any thought of him; but yet his memory never leaves me, and my love for him is part of my very soul. I was not able to help him in his life, but now he is dead, I can give up my life to

help others for his sake, and because of my love for him. And when I dare to let my thoughts dwell on him, I rest in the hope—you will not tell me it is wrong—that no soul is lost which has a germ of good in it; and that in that other world, where he will know the truth which meant nothing to him here, where he will see the great vindication of good, and realise God's abhorrence of evil, he will be brought, though by almost infinite suffering, to final repentance. Evelyn, if this were not true, could I love him as I do still?

"Perhaps I have written too openly, but you will understand.—Your loving

"PATIENCE."

Mark Forrest read the letter, but said

nothing till his wife heard him murmur almost to himself—

"Nor follow him
Into that sad, obscure, sequestered state
Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
He else made first in vain; which must not be."

Then he looked up, and his eyes were glistening.

"Will she have the strength and resolution to carry this out?" he asked.

"I think so," answered his wife. "Most women would not, but Patience will."

THE END.

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